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Larson

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THE DEATH CALVES

Judy, Nice the alfalfa breath

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THE WAX BUTCHER MUSEUM

MRS. O'LEARY'S COW
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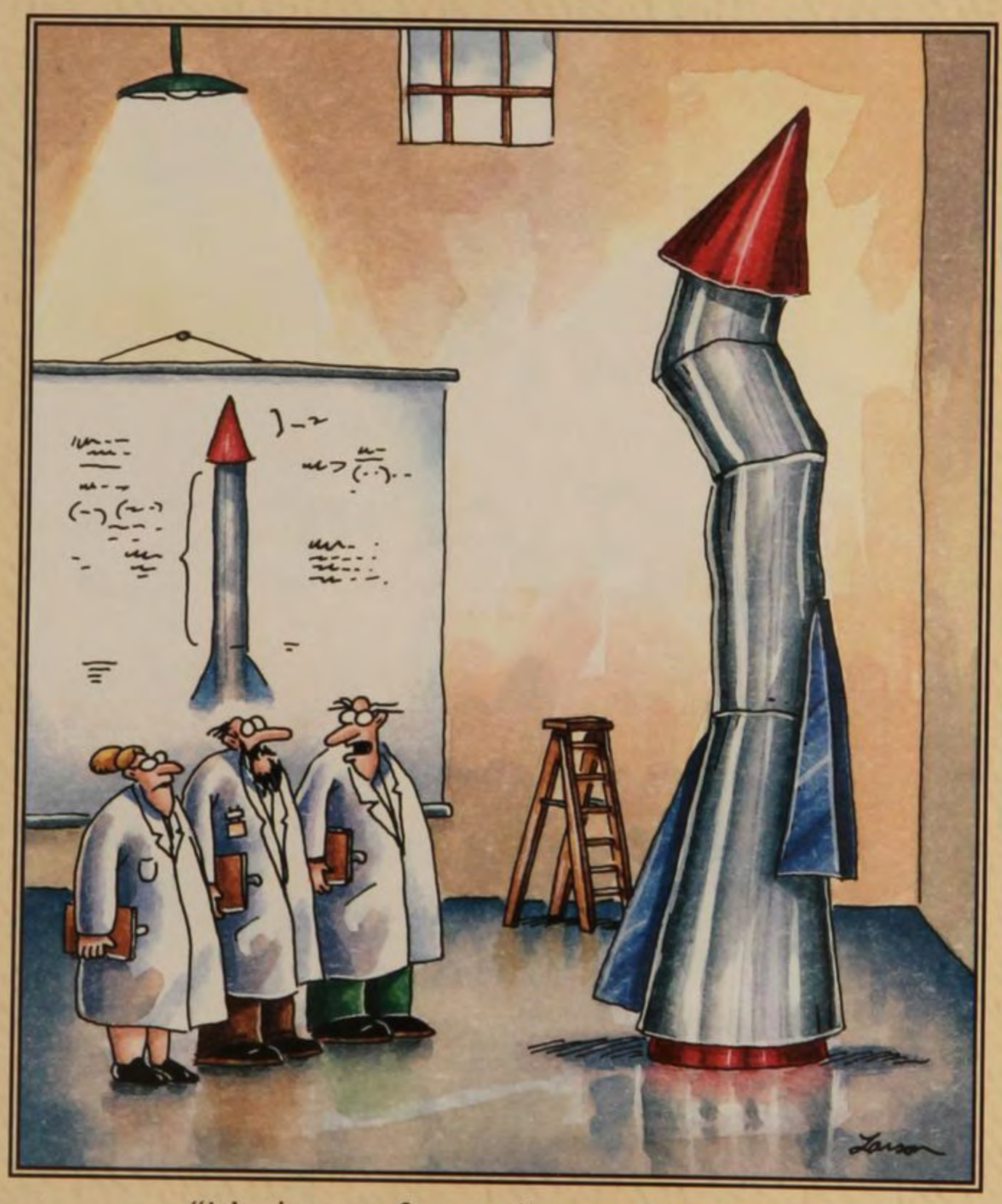
Bob Barker sucks on electric fences

TEXAS

THE COMPLETE FAR SIDE

VOLUME ONE
1980-1986

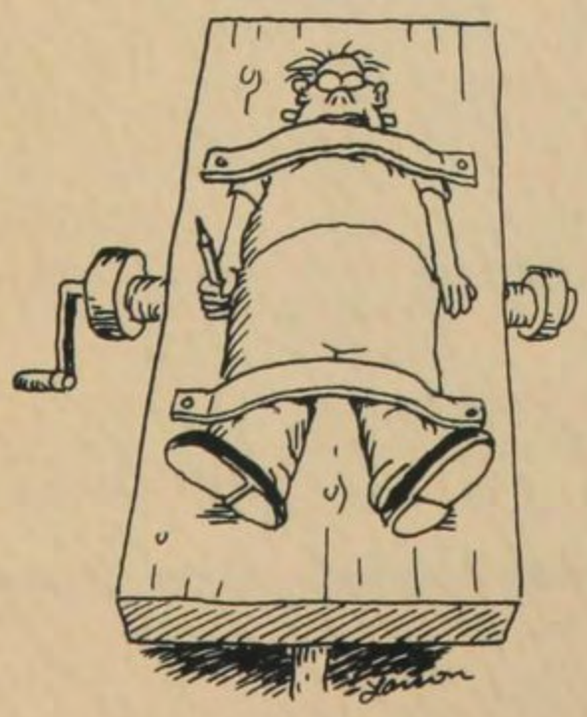


"It's time we face reality, my friends. ...
We're not exactly rocket scientists."

THE COMPLETE FAR SIDE

VOLUME ONE
1980-1986

Gary Larson



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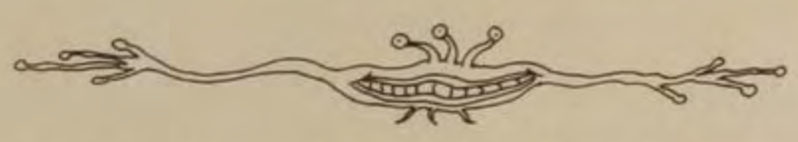
FOREWORD

By Steve Martin

Different Beginnings for Gary Larson Essay

I am sorry to report, given the occasion of this very important publication, that many of the scenes depicted in this book are actually false. Several years ago I began to suspect the veracity of a few of the events portrayed by Larson. "Wait a minute," I thought. "A chicken couldn't confess to murdering Old MacDonald: Old MacDonald was a *fictitious* character." It was a small thought that grew to a big one: Was Gary Larson just making a lot of this stuff up? Though many believe that chickens talk, does it necessarily follow that likewise so do ducks and dogs?



Gary Larson came to my house last weekend, and I was surprised to find that he is an insect. All this time I figured him for a bear or a little fat kid, but when he walked across my ceiling and hid in the drapes, I knew ...

An Open Letter to Gary

Dear Gary,

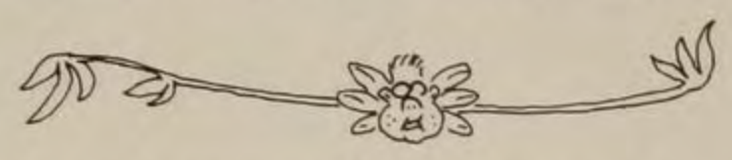
Life does not come with little frames around it. Life is not topsy-turvy and surreal. Life is hard and it's not really funny when you make light of it. Have you ever read Schopenhauer? He thinks that death ...

I suppose Mr. Larson and others like him think it's funny to depict young boys standing on top of a flattened dog. This attempt at "humor" actually teaches and encourages young boys to stand on top of flattened dogs. In fact, though I am not a young boy, I myself was tempted to stand on top of a flattened dog. But you know what? There are no flattened dogs where I live. There are, however, hundreds of cats who, though not flattened, are actually quite thin, and if laid on their side, would qualify as flattened. I'll guarantee that standing on them was not funny. Not really funny, not har-de-har-har funny, just mildly funny.

Gary Larson is the greatest living cartoonist OOPS sorry, Gary—make that greatest beheaded cartoonist ...

Gary Larson, born Garyisovich Larsonoffsky, the third son of a farmer and a duck, raised in Peking, swore when he saw his family being taken away and bean-fried by two pandas that he would move to the United States and make enough money so that one day he could return in triumph, though when he did make enough money, he thought, "Actually I'd prefer to lose all my money and return in defeat."

Many Larson scholars like to cite panel 108, caption 16, as proof of the existence of a deity. However, the exact nature of the deity is contradicted by several other panels. Scholars working at the Institute of Talking Dogs offer panel 247, with its image of two men standing on white clouds of heaven talking out of earshot of the deity, as proof of Larson's *theory of semi-omniscience*. In another panel depicting heaven, the newly deceased are issued harps, indicating a *benevolent un-musical mover*. However, the two men in the previous panel do not have harps, they have a gun. So how does a supreme being regarded as a *benevolent un-musical mover* fit into the *theory of semi-omniscience,* especially when the devil, who is handing out accordions, is revealed to be a blithe humorist (panel 42, caption 16)?



I'll bet Gary Larson's neighbors would say that Gary is very quiet:

"He kept to himself, never bothered anybody."

"And how did you feel when you found out he wrote *The Far Side*?"

"I was shocked. He seemed like such a nice guy."

Questions I would like to ask Gary Larson:

Who are you currently dating?

What's coming up in the future for a Gary Larson?

Are you crazy and nutty at home?

If you were in a strict foreign country run by zealots, and they demanded that you renounce your belief that humans can deflate like balloons and fly around the room, would you recant, escape, or die while being squeezed by red-hot pincers?

Hey Gary, what do you think?

Steve

Introduction

by Jake Morrissey

"Well, this started off innocently enough ..."
—Gary Larson

My favorite Gary Larsons were never published. For the better part of a decade they sat at the bottom of a desk drawer, crammed into a tattered white envelope, forgotten by me and, no doubt, by Gary. I rediscovered them by chance one afternoon as I rifled through a drawer looking for something unrelated to *The Far Side.* The contents slipped out of the envelope and fell into my hand. It took a moment for me to recognize them and to realize what small wonders they are.

Wonders the size of a Post-it note.

Some of the most revealing work Gary Larson ever produced as a cartoonist can be found in the brief notes he stuck to his cartoons just before he sent them to Universal Press Syndicate, where I worked as his editor for the last 10 years that he drew *The Far Side.* Every week, as his deadline loomed and the Federal Express driver hovered expectantly at his door, Gary would dash off last-minute comments about the cartoons he was sending me. Some of the notes suggested how he thought a caption could be improved; others wondered if a drawing would reproduce satisfactorily in newspapers. A couple even questioned whether a cartoon was funny at all. They were pithy, astute, and self-deprecating, but what I like best about them now is the insight they offer into the process of creating *The Far Side.* In a way, they are a peek behind the curtain.

I can offer no reasonable explanation for why I kept these notes—they certainly weren't written for the ages. I know I didn't keep all of them; usually I threw them away. But one day as Gary and I were talking on the phone, instead of throwing the note into the wastebasket, I stuffed it into a spare envelope. And so a habit was born.

"I have no idea why I drew this or what it means,
but compared to the ***next*** *cartoon, it's very normal."*

Rereading Gary's notes, I am struck by how open he is to his own creativity, how willing he is to be guided by it. Several mention that his initial ideas for cartoons turned into (pupated?) panels that differed markedly from their inspiration. What continues to interest me about Gary Larson the cartoonist is *how* his methods differ from those of his peers. Many cartoonists begin with a gag, a punch line, and write toward it. Gary begins with the seed of an idea, which often doesn't feel traditionally funny, and then tends it a bit to see what takes root. What's so exceptional about *The Far Side* is that sometimes what sprouts isn't what anyone expects, least of all Gary: He plants what he thinks is a carrot and it turns out to be cabbage. It is this sense of not quite knowing how something will come out that makes *The Far Side* subversively exhilarating.

Cows ring doorbells. Monsters' eyes reflect in rearview mirrors. Praying mantises bicker over who devoured whose mate. Surprise may be a part of all humor, but in *The Far Side,* surprise, even astonishment, is the norm.

"Jake: Your version was the best of all. (Damn it!)"

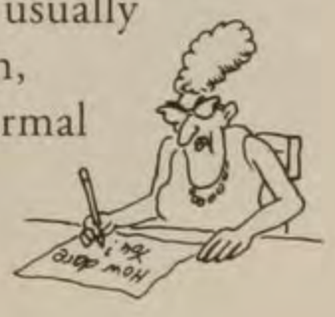
Editing Gary's work can be tricky: "Improving" a vision as idiosyncratic as his without his input isn't easy, though there were editors who thought it was. "Just take the word out, nobody will get the damn thing anyway," a newspaper editor once said to me when he called to complain about the language in a *Far Side* caption. What the editor didn't understand—or didn't care to understand—was how hard Gary works to get his art and his language just right. And I always kept in mind that readers turn to *The Far Side* for Gary's view of the universe, not mine, so my job was to help him find in himself the best work he was capable of.

Early on, we settled into a working rhythm that served us well. Every Monday morning I received the next week's cartoons from Gary, and after going over them on my own I would call him. We would then discuss each cartoon, addressing the points he raised in the notes he attached, editing language or modifying art when we agreed it was necessary. He always knew where the true humor was in each panel—sometimes the best part of a cartoon was the reaction on a character's face, for example—and he knew when to stop fiddling with it, which some cartoonists can't do.

Gary is a rigorous, even ruthless, editor of his own work, writing and rewriting his captions so the flow of the words matches the cartoon's art and tone. He understands that the heart of a successful cartoon lies in the writing. Good writing can save bad art, but good art can never save bad writing. That is why Gary willingly reworked captions word by word to get them right. If you spend any time at all analyzing *Far Side* captions, you'll see that removing a word can ruin the rhythm and dilute the humor. We once had six different phone conversations in one day about a single word in a caption. (No, I won't tell you which cartoon; I invoke the cartoonist-editor privilege.)

His intriguing use of language also had unexpected benefits: Helping to decide the correct spelling of *luposlipaphobia* was a lot of fun for someone who likes to play with language. Saying the word aloud still makes me smile.

Finding the right order for the *Far Side* cartoons over the course of a week was as important as finding the right language in the captions. We tried to pace the cartoons based on our own admittedly idiosyncratic view of newspaper readership. We opened the week on Monday with what we thought was the funniest cartoon. Tuesday's was usually a little less strong, but Wednesday's had to be the second funniest, since newspapers in North America usually ran their coupons and food advertisements in that day's edition, which generally meant a fatter newspaper and a wider-than-normal readership. Thursday's cartoon was more often than not one of the week's strange cartoons, while Friday's and Saturday's were usually the oddest of the group—the ones we weren't



quite sure people would get but which we liked anyway. (The Sunday cartoons were another matter entirely.)

I make no claim that this was the most effective way to publish *The Far Side;* no doubt there are people who will find this system bizarre. But it suited us and *The Far Side,* since it seemed to mimic its readers' tastes and sensibilities.

"For the life of me, I can't pronounce let alone spell the word know[n] to every trumpet player. Omnisure? Ambrochure? Oxzfyghzx? What is it?"

But still the questions came—sometimes before the cartoons were even published. In the days before the common use of the Internet, I was the one who hunted down the correct spellings of words that Gary wanted to use in his cartoons, words such as "embouchure," and more unusual phrases or names, such as "Puddin' Tame." I spent hours on the telephone over the years asking experts and librarians to give me the correct spellings of the strange words that popped up in *The Far Side*. I did not usually tell them why I was calling. I did once, but I flustered a librarian at the Kansas City Public Library so much that she told me to hang up and call the reference desk again. "I can't help someone I don't understand," she said, sounding a trifle panicked at the mere thought of *The Far Side.*

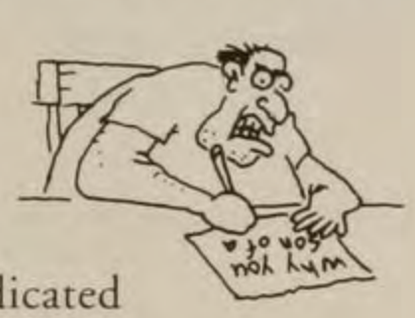
"Not sure about the spelling of Honah-Lee. More importantly, this is a little obtuse. Do you get it, and did you get it right away? This is a test. Do not attempt to ask someon[e] else."

As all cartoonists do, Gary draws inspiration from personal experience: his interests, his childhood memories, the world he sees on his way to play basketball. He is sensitive to the fact that his readers may have a different view of life, so we often discussed whether they would understand a particular cartoon and find it funny. A line from *Puff, the Magic Dragon,* for example: Would the millions of people around the world who read *The Far Side* recognize the references? As Gary's audience grew, so did the number of head-scratchers, those readers who didn't quite understand *The Far Side* every day. So some cartoons became a judgment call: Should we release a cartoon that not everyone would understand, or use one that more people might understand but that might not be as funny? More often than not, funny won out. So I became the guy who could explain every *Far Side* cartoon. I know that the praying mantis standing atop a gramophone in one cartoon is the only insect that can cock its head at the same angle as the RCA Victor dog could in the classic "His Master's Voice" pose. And I am one of the few people outside Seattle and the cafés of Italy who knew what a "latte" was before Starbucks made it a ubiquitous part of the coffee experience. I fielded dozens of calls and letters from puzzled readers who thought that the cowboy who asked, "Latte, Jed?" was proposing a bizarre sexual frolic.

A week did not go by that I was not asked—by an editor, by a reader, by the media—to explain a particular *Far Side* cartoon. When I did, I invariably heard one of two reactions: a moment of silence at the other end of the phone and then a sudden "Aaaah, *now* I get it," or a perturbed, "That's the joke? That's not funny." I tried to explain to those disappointed souls that a cartoon usually isn't funny when it has to be explained to you.

"Would you mind responding to this guy on my behalf? I would just say you shared his comments with me, and that I offered my apologies for causing him any anger or concern ... and does he know how many dead babies it takes to—oh, forget the last part."

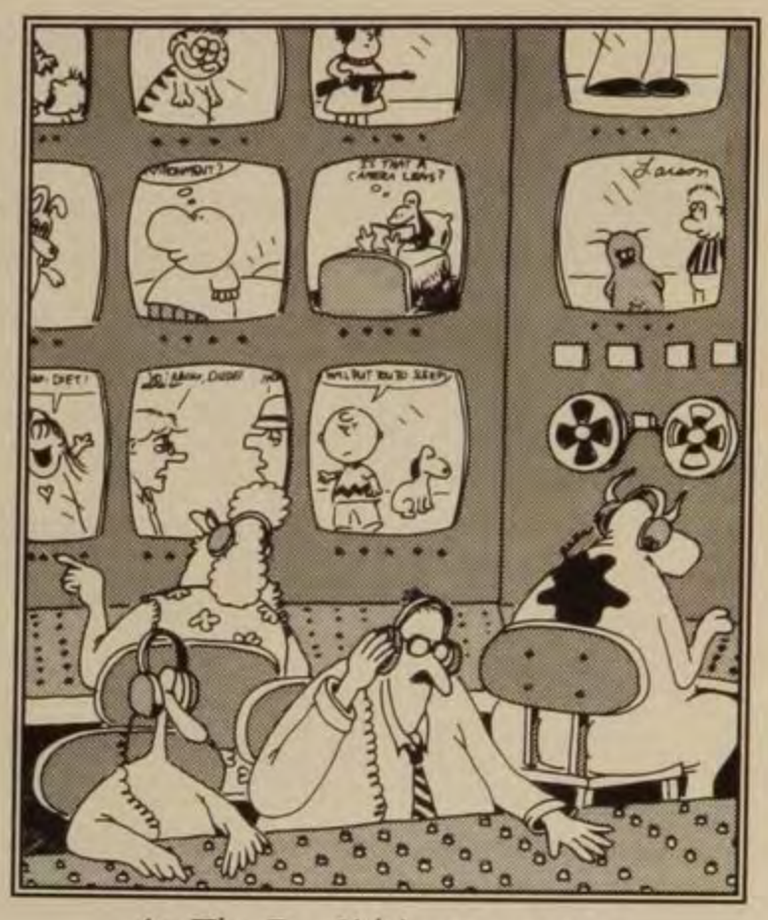
The thornier problems were those readers who understood a *Far Side* cartoon but didn't like what they read and felt the need to express their indignation. Because Gary wants his work to speak for itself and was never comfortable discussing it, I was the first line of complaint for anyone who was offended by a *Far Side* cartoon. I became adroit at replying to a litany of protests about the cartoon: How it was anti-dog, anti-cat, and anti-God; how it was pro-torture, pro-Satan, and pro-violence against animals. None of this was true, of course, as I tried over and over to explain. I came to understand that what bothered people most about *The Far Side* was that they couldn't predict where Gary would find his humor, and that can be disturbing. It always amused me that the cartoons that generated the most irate comments from people who found them reprehensible and morally bankrupt were exactly the same ones that other people indicated were their favorites.



"Originally, what made this thing funny to me, was the fact we couldn't see the tarantula—suggesting where the hell is it? I still think that's what makes this effective. Yet, last-minute stuff, I drew this one, big, hairy leg, making the humor less 'sophisticated,' I think, but maybe a more direct line to the funny bone? (It could easily be whited out at your end.) This would be a good question in the HATs. (Humor Aptitude Tests—I got 680.)"

As painstaking as Gary is with his writing, he is just as careful about making his artwork unambiguous. Though he is the first to admit that his drawing style isn't sophisticated, it shares a certain minimalist charm with the likes of classics such as *Krazy Kat.* Like *Krazy Kat,* the art of *The Far Side* is simple, even naive, but it's comfortably free of the self-conscious, archcartooniness that characterizes so many comic strips. *The Far Side* doesn't look slick or processed because it isn't—because Gary never wanted it to look that way.

His choice of subject matter is just as personal. One of the more interesting subsets of *The Far Side* are the cartoons about cartooning itself. Several characters from other comic strips have appeared in *The Far Side,* notably Charlie Brown, Lucy, Garfield, and even Mark Trail, but I've always found the cartoons about the form more interesting. The characters understand they are in a cartoon and that they are being watched. This conceit makes fun of the idea of *being* a cartoon, an unusual conceit for newspaper comics pages when these first appeared. Over the years Gary has used this technique sparingly but to great effect. And the idea stayed with him: The final two *Far Side* cartoons that appeared on January 1, 1995, were both about cartooning and Gary's role as a cartoonist.



At *The Far Side*'s spy center

Sometimes I am asked if I think these are the "best" *Far Side* cartoons. I do admit to having a special affection for several others. One mad-scientist cartoon mentions a "Dr. Morrissey" who creates a hideous beast with the nine heads of the Brady Bunch. In another, Gary resorted to his version of "the dog ate my homework" to explain why that week's batch of cartoons was one short. He submitted a panel of an angry truck driver shaking his fist at an oblivious driver who had just cut him off. The caption reads: "Suddenly, Jake realized there was nothing funny about this cartoon. 'Maybe,' he murmured to himself, *'That's* what's funny.' (However, a replacement cartoon would arrive on his desk Tuesday and he would breathe a tremendous sigh of relief.)"

The art of conversation

Finally, there is a simple cartoon whose most interesting characteristic is its genesis. On Halloween night 1989, I sat on a wide windowsill in an apartment in New York City that Gary and his wife had rented while he was on sabbatical. As we talked, Gary said suddenly, "You just gave me an idea for a cartoon. It's the first idea I've had since I've been on sabbatical." Several months later, after he had returned to drawing *The Far Side,* Gary submitted a panel in which

a woman was standing in front of a man hanging in a picture frame who was prattling on about the weather. The woman is thinking, "Oh, my ... This is depressing." The cartoon's caption is "The art of conversation."

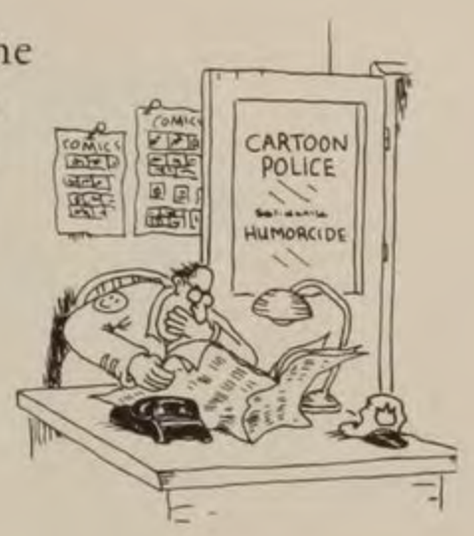
The cartoon doesn't cast me in the most flattering light, I know, but that's not something I dwell on. I prefer to think of it as an object lesson in understanding that ideas for cartoons can come from anywhere if you know where to look.

Being a cartoonist can be very solitary: just you and the Bristol board in front of you. And it's not that easy. Anyone who thinks he can get rich by producing something funny that's read every day over soggy cornflakes should buy a lottery ticket instead. There are a limited number of comic strip slots in newspapers, and many of them are filled by cartoons drawn by old men and have been around for decades. (The Web is changing this, but for many cartoonists, the newspaper is still the venue of choice.) Imagine that the only bookstore in town has a selection of just two dozen titles, some of them 70 years old, and you have a fairly accurate idea of what cartoon syndication is like: It's a very competitive business. The odds are stacked against you.

But sometimes, when newspaper editors take a chance and readers aren't looking that carefully, something a little innovative can sneak in. Day by day, panel by panel, a cartoonist with a different point of view that's clear and fresh and impertinent catches people unaware, engaging them in unexpected ways and prompting them to think a little about the world around them. A connection is forged. Gary Larson and *The Far Side* did that.

"If by chance worse comes to worse and you don't hear from me—please just use your own judgment as far as selecting one version over another, one word over another, or repairing any of my usual grammatical errors. In other words, make me funny, Jake."

I never made Gary Larson funny. No one did. What he created over 15 years came from someplace unique within him, a universe all his own. That is why *The Far Side* still seems fresh, still seems rare, years after the cartoons were first drawn.



All I did was save the Post-its.

Larson

Preface

You know I'm nervous.

As I write, it's been almost seven years since I hung up my eraser. (For the record, an eraser was the most essential tool I owned.) And this is the first time, ever, that I have reviewed my own work in its entirety. I must tell you: I have seen things.

To begin with, I stumbled across a couple small mysteries herein: One cartoon appears twice, years apart, but with different captions. I have no idea what happened there, except that I strongly suspect chaos theory was involved. And another I unwittingly drew twice—again, several years apart. (No wonder I had this eerie sensation the thing was practically drawing itself.) I'm not going to identify any of the above offenders; I'm banking on you just saying "déjà vu" a couple times and moving on.

Now, that covers four cartoons—as for the remaining 4,333.

In hindsight, I realize it probably wasn't a great idea to base any cartoon on some news event, fad, expression, person, movie, TV show, or commercial that was destined to fade from everyone's memory before my ink was dry. Of course, time eventually erodes all humor, which is why you no longer hear the one about the Visigoth and the Hittite, or that old Neanderthal favorite, "Why did the Archaeopteryx cross the road?" (Actually, that last one still works for me.)

And then there are those cartoons that trigger something a friend of mine calls the What-the? Reflex. This reflex is entirely involuntary, much like the way a dead frog's leg can be made to kick with the proper stimulus. You'll see a cartoon, and "What the?" will simply burst from your voice box. (I love biology.)

Of course, there are a number of other reflexes that could be discussed (the more upsetting My God! Reflex is sure to strike on occasion), and I'm obviously hopeful that laughter is included among them. But there is only one more I wish to mention, and one I hope you encounter only rarely. Because this is the bad one. This is the one that any credible cartoonist truly fears. And it is this: the silent yawn. It seems innocuous enough, perhaps even preferred to the My God! Reflex. It is not. It is death. To bore someone—to fail to engage them on some level, good or bad (and you hope it's good), to fail to give something to them that sticks to their bones—even if they wish you hadn't—that is simply a creative effort that tanked. It's a frog's leg that not only won't kick, it won't even twitch. It's just going to lie there, cold and still. I beg you, please: Quit poking the damn thing and just move on. I'm sure a good, solid "What the?" is just around the corner.

Yes, I'm definitely nervous.

However, let me quickly add, I don't mean to sound defensive, or somehow distancing myself from anything in this book. Quite the contrary. Despite

the experiments that somehow went awry, I'm actually proud of this body of work. I'm ready to hand it in. (And, if nothing else, the other cartoonists will never call me "Skinny Books" again.)

So why, I have to ask myself, am I nervous? Well, I think it has something to do with what the cartoonist Richard Guindon once said to me when I was first starting out. We were discussing our shared, iron-clad rule of never accepting cartoon ideas from others, and Richard said, "It's like having someone write in your diary." It's an apt analogy. As I look over my 14 years of *Far Side* cartoons, what I really see are my daily "entries," my musings, my little experiments in ink. Every one of these cartoons is just something that drifted into my head when I was alone with my thoughts. And, for better or worse, I "jotted" them down. It was only later, when perhaps I received an angry letter from someone, that it struck me: Hey! Someone's been reading my diary!

Enough of my blabbering. What's done is done. I'll get out of your way. But maybe it would be helpful if I told you this: My drafting table, where I drew *The Far Side* for most of my career, faced a window that overlooked a beautiful garden; beyond the garden was a lake, and beyond the lake Mount Rainier rose majestically into the Washington sky.

I worked at night.

—Gary Larson

The Larson brothers, California (1957) *Photo by Gary's mom*

Acknowledgments

Someone once told me that no one has ever realized their goal in life without someone else having opened that first door for them. I believe it's true. (Even Jeremiah Johnson got that old geezer to show him the "ways" of the mountain.)

My Door Opener was Stan Arnold, the General Manager of Chronicle Features Syndicate. I met Stan in the summer of 1979, and in the space of about 20 minutes, while sitting in his office, I went from Gary Larson the Confused to Gary Larson the Confusing Cartoonist. (I guess Stan must have seen something in me, sort of like the way a horse trainer might recognize qualities in a two-year-old, despite the dull expression on its face.) When Stan passed away a few years ago, it was a contemplative time for me as I recalled the man who, well—there's no other way to put it—changed my life.

But if Stan Arnold opened the door to my cartooning career, I had a slew of folks who strove to keep it from swinging back shut on me.

Stuart Dodds was the lone and intrepid salesperson who first ventured forth with *The Far Side,* knocking on the office doors of newspaper editors, presenting my work, and braving their occasional shock and indignation. Believe me, in the heyday of *Nancy* and *Blondie,* what Stuart did took some chutzpah. (I've long suspected he pitched *The Far Side* wearing one of those big nose and glasses disguise.) If there was some kind of Purple Heart for syndicate salespeople, Stuart would be plastered with them.

Similarly, I must deeply thank those newspapers that did not recoil when they first saw my work. Indeed, a handful even embraced it. When you draw a cartoon that may, for example, show a nerdy kid walking toward the front of his class for "show 'n' tell," carrying a jar with a human head in it, then you definitely need some folks around you who aren't afraid to shake things up a little, or at least are willing to look the other way once in a while. During the first year or two that I was drawing, these papers essentially paid my rent and kept me in ink.

And on the subject of ink, I suppose I know a little something about drawing, but when it later came to painting my work, I sat on the bench and watched as a number of artists made wonderful, often inspired, contributions to my work. I am extremely grateful to them all, but I must specifically mention Donna Oatney, the alpha artist who created the lion's share of watercolors within these two volumes. If anyone ever came close to having a mind-meld with me, it was Donna. (Frankly, I think this was starting to worry her.)

My long-time editor at Universal Press Syndicate was the invaluable Jake Morrissey. And let me say this about editors in general: Not having a good one is like doing brain surgery with a butter knife—you can do it, but you're always paranoid the other surgeons are rolling their eyes when you're not

looking. What a relief to have someone standing next to you hand you a sharp scalpel and just say, "Cut that thing, Gary! Right there! Cut it, damn you!" Thanks, Jake.

In team sports, they refer to some athletes as the "Go-To Guy." In my world, that person was Tom Thornton, the president of Andrews McMeel Publishing. Always the trusted voice of calm and reason, Tom often guided me through the Valley of Nuts, where I believe I had a tendency to sometimes linger. Moreover, you hold in your hands a book for which virtually nothing was spared when it came to quality. That's not a rollover decision for any publisher, but I've always had a playbook with just one page in it, which simply says, "Get the ball into Tom's hands."

I cannot adequately thank my wife, Toni, for her unwavering support. Even with the help of a reliable editor, it takes someone who truly cares about you, someone who can look at something you've worked really hard on, and then, with eyes full of love, gaze into your own and softly say, "That's not funny."

My sincere gratitude is extended to this book's main editors, Dorothy O'Brien and Chris Schillig, for their collective advice and feedback, and also to author/editor John Yow, for his own helpful insights. Also, my thanks go to Charles Wheeler, who created the inspired database that allowed us all (especially the designer) to maneuver through thousands of images and make innumerable decisions on the crafting of this book.

Early in the planning process, someone at my publisher warned me that there was no avoiding some screwup or two in the final product. Too many layers to this thing, they said, and the glitch gnomes are always out in force. Probably true, but I immediately decided to haul out my secret weapon: a human microscope who is fondly known around here as Kate "The Eye" Gentry. You can stand outside The Eye's office when she's proofreading and hear those glitch gnomes scream for their lives. It's a lovely sound.

Now rumor has it that this book's designer and guiding force, Michael Reagan (not the son of a former president; the son of a ship fitter), having wrestled for three years with this project's enormous complexities (and one Mother Hen cartoonist), may have gone insane just as *The Complete Far Side* went to press. But I hope you'll agree, Michael went out in glory. (And should the rumor prove true, I certainly intend to swing by on occasion and express my deep thanks to him during visiting hours.)

And finally, of course, I must thank you. I found myself so often in hot water when my work crossed some invisible line, I intermittently thought, "Well, that was fun while it lasted." The Humor Police, it seems, are always hovering around; I just didn't know you were out there as well. Boy, did you guys save my butt on more than one occasion. My gratitude knows no bounds.

I would also like to thank Jeremiah Johnson.

Production Note

It all started simply enough: I received a call from Tom Thornton, the president of Andrews McMeel, in November of 2000, asking if I would be interested in working on the final *Far Side* book. It would include everything Gary had done during the 14 years *The Far Side* was in syndication, over 4,300 cartoons. I was a big fan so it was not a difficult decision.

I had never met Gary, so we set up a meeting a few weeks later to initiate a relationship that, as we both realized, would need to work effectively for the next three years. After all, this would be Gary's legacy book, and he was very serious about having it done right. In person, I found Gary to be surprisingly shy and modest; he does not try to impress you with his brilliance or overwhelm you with his ego. However, under that low-key, mild-mannered appearance is indeed a man of steel. Gary is ferocious in guarding against mediocrity and a perfectionist about his art. We have had endless discussions and generated a zillion e-mails about things like commas, italics, em dashes, and word choice—and that was just for the captions. When it came to reproducing the drawings or creating new ones—those black lines that make up the world Gary lives in—well, suffice it to say that Gary is unrelenting when it comes to making his work as good as it can be. (You can probably see why it did not stay simple for very long.)

But who can blame him? *The Far Side* was unique; there has never been anything quite like it, before or since. Maybe the timing was right. The first *Far Side* cartoon appeared in 1980, the year we elected Ronald Reagan. And over the next 14 years, a steady diet of hilarious abnormality was maybe just what the world needed. Or maybe a steady diet of bizarre genius was simply what the comics page needed—a riotous upheaval in a land where change comes glacially slow.

For whatever reason, *The Far Side* rocked the world. It became a cultural phenomenon. People didn't simply read *The Far Side;* they reacted to it, often with strange passion. On that first visit to Seattle, I was flabbergasted when Toni, Gary's wife, showed me a room full of boxes filled with letters that Gary and his publisher had received over the years. A room full. A lot of it was fan mail, of course, but there was an amazing amount of hate mail, much of it suggesting that Gary was a very sick person and should be put away, or at the very least barred from the comics page.

Not surprisingly, given the odd animals, insects, microbes, aliens, and humans that populate the panel, there were also thousands of letters from readers pointing out some mistake or other. Another large category consisted of letters from people who generally liked *The Far Side* but felt that in the case of a specific cartoon, Gary had gone too far and had offended them. In other words, as long as he poked fun at someone else, Gary's work was great. Looking back through all the cartoons, I've concluded that over the years he has been very evenhanded and managed to offend nearly every group.

But more than that, of course, what the letters show is that Gary engaged his readers—perhaps more than any cartoonist before or since. The response he stirred in the heart and mind of his audience—whether outrage, dismay, wonder, or hilarity—constitutes the necessary other half of the *Far Side* experience.

One last thing: You will probably notice that we organized the book in chronological order, but not rigidly. In the end, this is a book about images and at times the design overruled a strict chronology.

I hope you enjoy your journey into *The Far Side* as much as I have. Buckle up—it's going to be a wild ride.

—Michael Reagan

THE
COMPLETE
FAR SIDE
VOL I
VOL II
NOTICE
UNDER CONSTRUCTION
PERMIT NO. 79-7417
CONTRACTOR: ANDREWS MCMEEL PUBLISHING
ARCHITECT: LIONHEART BOOKS
EXT. PAINT CONTRACTOR: JERRY TARTILLI
CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS: LARSON SUPPLY
GRAND OPENING - FALL 2003
Larson

Larson

On Dorothy Parker, Gorilla Masks, and a Very Close Call

A few months before *The Far Side* made its formal debut, I was sitting in the San Francisco office of my editor-to-be, Stan Arnold, the head honcho at Chronicle Features Syndicate. And Stan, studying my meager portfolio, suddenly asked me if I would consider doing a strip. (Comic, not the dance.)

I was terrified. *The Far Side* comic strip? I had a single-image brain; I drew single-image cartoons. My primary influences had been Gahan Wilson and B. Kliban, both masters of the panel form who also spoke to my own sense of humor. There were a handful of others: George Booth, Edward Gorey, and the indisputable Charles Atlas of dark humor, Charles Addams. Nary a strip cartoonist in the bunch. I was doomed.

When it came to strips, for me, there was really only Don Martin of *Mad* magazine. Martin was not only a god to a lot of kids of my generation, he was a cartoonist's cartoonist. (Not only were his ideas often hysterical, the guy could just plain *draw*.) And I was no Don Martin. For that matter, I wasn't even Gary Larson; I was just an eager-to-please lump of self-doubt sitting in some editor's office.

Truth is, I've always been sort of in awe of comic strips. I used to think, How do those guys do it? As a kid, I always had a fondness for *Alley Oop,* and later on I consistently enjoyed the work of a couple of my contemporaries, Bill Watterson *(Calvin and Hobbes)* and Berkeley Breathed *(Bloom County)*. But I could never get inside the *heads* of strip cartoonists, even the ones I liked. Clearly, I was wired differently.

I haven't reflected on any of this until now, but I believe I may have come up with a theory—just a theory—on why, for me, a single-panel cartoon was so natural, while the thought of drawing and writing a strip struck terror in my heart. As it seems so much does in life, it boils down to this: the way I was raised.

Imagine your own father sitting at the Algonquin Round Table, surrounded by that famous group of New York intellectuals. Would he most likely attempt to use his verbal alacrity and facile mind to impress and entertain everyone? Or would he find a quiet moment and simply lean over and ask Dorothy Parker to pull his finger? (Sorry, Dad, but I know the answer to this one.)

In short, the Larson Round Table was not a place where sharp dialogue and witticisms abounded. They happened, of course, and I hasten to add that wit was especially my mother's strong suit. But in reality you didn't fear a verbal put-down as much as you feared someone slipping a small invertebrate into your glass of milk while your head was

turned. It wasn't a witty retort that ensured your survival; it was good peripheral vision.

What I'm clumsily trying to say here is that, like the famous folks who once lunched at the Algonquin, most strip cartoonists (in my opinion, at least) approach their work from an appreciation of wit. And wit, of course, is the reflection of an agile and creative mind. Or, as my dictionary says, "a talent for banter." What's relevant to me, as a cartoonist, is what that implies: If you're striving to be witty, then you need banter, and if you need banter, you need a strip. You need characters like a sit-com needs them, talking to one another, setting things up, leading to that rimshot in the last panel when something clever or unexpected is said. (Okay, I know there are exceptions to any formula; I'm just firing some broadsides here.)

Wit, I think, grows out of a conscious desire to make someone else laugh, to be entertaining, to be liked. (I mean, why else make the effort?) A sense of humor, on the other hand, has to do with what makes *us* laugh. It's that largely unconscious, reactionary "funny bone" we all possess (well, most of us, anyway), and it struggles to exercise any self-control. (All of us, I'm sure, have a memory of trying not to laugh at a time we sensed was inappropriate.) The two undoubtedly overlap, but my gut tells me these are different animals leading separate lives, except when they might run into each other at some water hole in our brains. (Note: Never see a neurologist who uses this kind of terminology.)

Our sense of humor obviously didn't "burst" on the scene one day; it's been carved into our respective brains during all our formative years, eventually becoming as much a part of us as our eye color. Wit, on the other hand, is living in the moment. It's out on the dance floor, twirling, kicking, showing its moves—everyone's watching, either in admiration or embarrassment. Sense of humor is lurking in the shadows, secretly hoping that Wit falls into the punch bowl.

I'm not out on that dance floor. I'm a lurker. I draw—and draw from—my family's sense of humor. If you would allow me any talent, it's simply this: I can, for whatever reason, reach down into my own brain, feel around in all the mush, find and extract something from my persona, and then graft it onto an idea. I guess it's a Little Jack Horner kind of thing, only I fully admit it was not always a plum I pulled out—there are things down there I probably should have jerked my hand away from as soon as I made contact. Too late now.

Physical comedy—especially if it contained psychological overtones, such as those old chestnuts fear and humiliation—pervaded our home like a poltergeist. Around any corner, in any room, humor lurked, waiting to pounce. Not "Stooge" humor, I assure you. Research,

observation, psychology, biology—these were the tools, usually applied with deathly nuance, that one used in the quest to amuse oneself. For me, it was all *Far Side* boot camp. Study your prey, approach carefully, savor the moment, and then strike. (Truthfully, I was more often the "prey" in these training exercises, but I nonetheless could appreciate the skill involved.)

A single drawing is all I ever needed. I rarely required a series of panels to set up a "gag" or a punch line. In fact, I never thought in terms of punch lines and gags. I never thought of myself as a "joke writer" with a drawing attached. Maybe that's what I was doing, in some people's minds. But to me, *The Far Side* was more of an attitude, a distillation of life that came from growing up in a family that had a deep, sincere appreciation for the many uses of a good gorilla mask. (It was kept on the shelf in the coat closet, for quick access.)

For me, that little rectangle I drew in was the equivalent of a canvas. I needed to stare at it for a while and try to "see" as much as I could before things began. The thought of storyboarding an idea just sounded like a lot of work, and it flat out didn't interest me. (Besides, I could never get the characters to look exactly the same from one little box to the next.)

Back to my meeting with Stan. (God, have I digressed.)

So I'm sitting there in his office, sweating. And he was going on, explaining about the strengths that comic strips held over panels. "People like to see characters they recognize," he said. It was the old familiarity-breeds-fondness thing. Strips engage the reader in a more intimate way, like an old friend who comes by to visit every day or so. And that leads to reader loyalty. Single-panel cartoons are like strangers that suddenly appear on your doorstep. No one flings open their door for strangers. However, if you look out and see good ol' Charlie Brown, it's like, why sure—open the door! C'mon in, Charlie! … Hey, wait! Quick! … Shut the door! There's a damn cow out there!

So once you've got your character established in the hearts and minds of readers, it's not a good idea to run him over with a truck a few weeks later. Whoa! I was not going to be good at developing a character. I was not going to be good at developing a strip. I was not going to be good at telling a joke in visual form. I was hit and run. My ever-changing characters got crunched, speared, shot, beheaded, eaten, stuffed, poisoned, and run over about twice a week. (Tastefully, of course.)

And yet another layer was added to the discussion when Stan said that strips were easier to *sell*. This was, I assumed, a big one. Newspapers, he said, really weren't thrilled with single-panel cartoons. Strips are easy to format on a comics page; single panels just throw the whole design out of whack. My cartoons might be funny, he encouraged, but couldn't I just

transfer my sense of humor over to a strip format? (Maybe that's when I should have asked him to pull my finger.)

Well, I sat there in Stan's office, listening to him describe the virtues of a strip, the headaches with a panel. I didn't say much (certainly nothing "witty"). Stan, I recall, wasn't really even looking at me; he was just flipping through my portfolio, talking about the wonders of comic strips, while clearly feeling me out about developing one strong, returning character. I just listened, smiling on the outside, dying on the inside.

And then, out of the blue, he said, "Well, let's just go ahead and do it your way." And that's the last time a comic strip was ever discussed. Believe me, I never felt such a whoosh of relief.

On December 31, 1979, *The Far Side*—a single-panel cartoon—was launched. I was crunching, spearing, shooting, beheading, eating, stuffing, poisoning, and running over my own characters within a week.

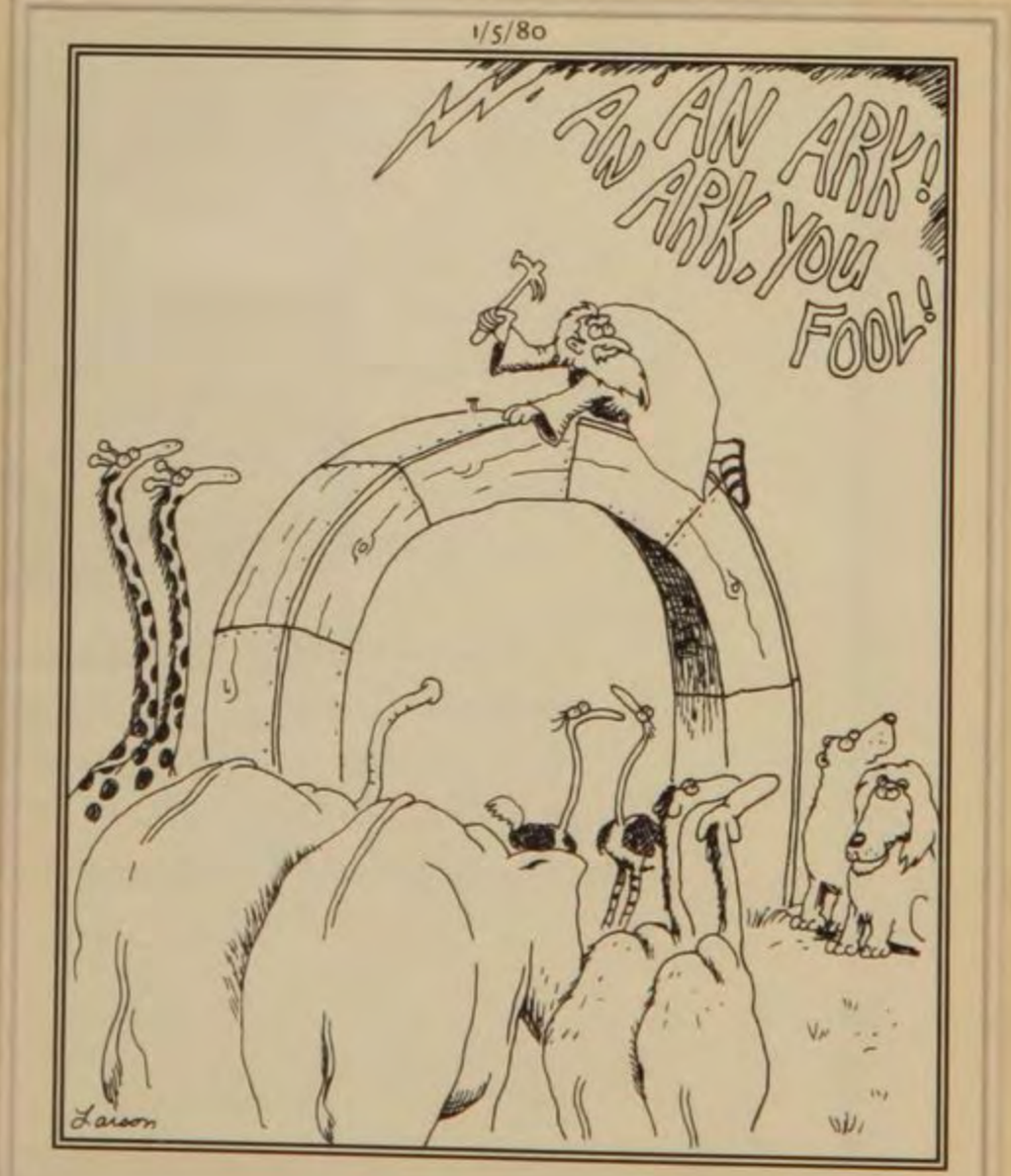
Tastefully, of course.

"Gee, Mom! Andy was just showing us how far
he could suck his lip into the bottle!"

January 1980

"Yes. ... They're quite strange during the larval stage."

"Of course I never eat the shells."



January 1980

1/8/80

"Egad! We must find some means of discarding the hideous thing!"

1/10/80

"Bring back his ear."

1/11/80

"Polly wanna cracker. ... Polly wanna cracker. ... Pretty bird. ... HARRY! DON'T SHOOT! ... Pretty bird."

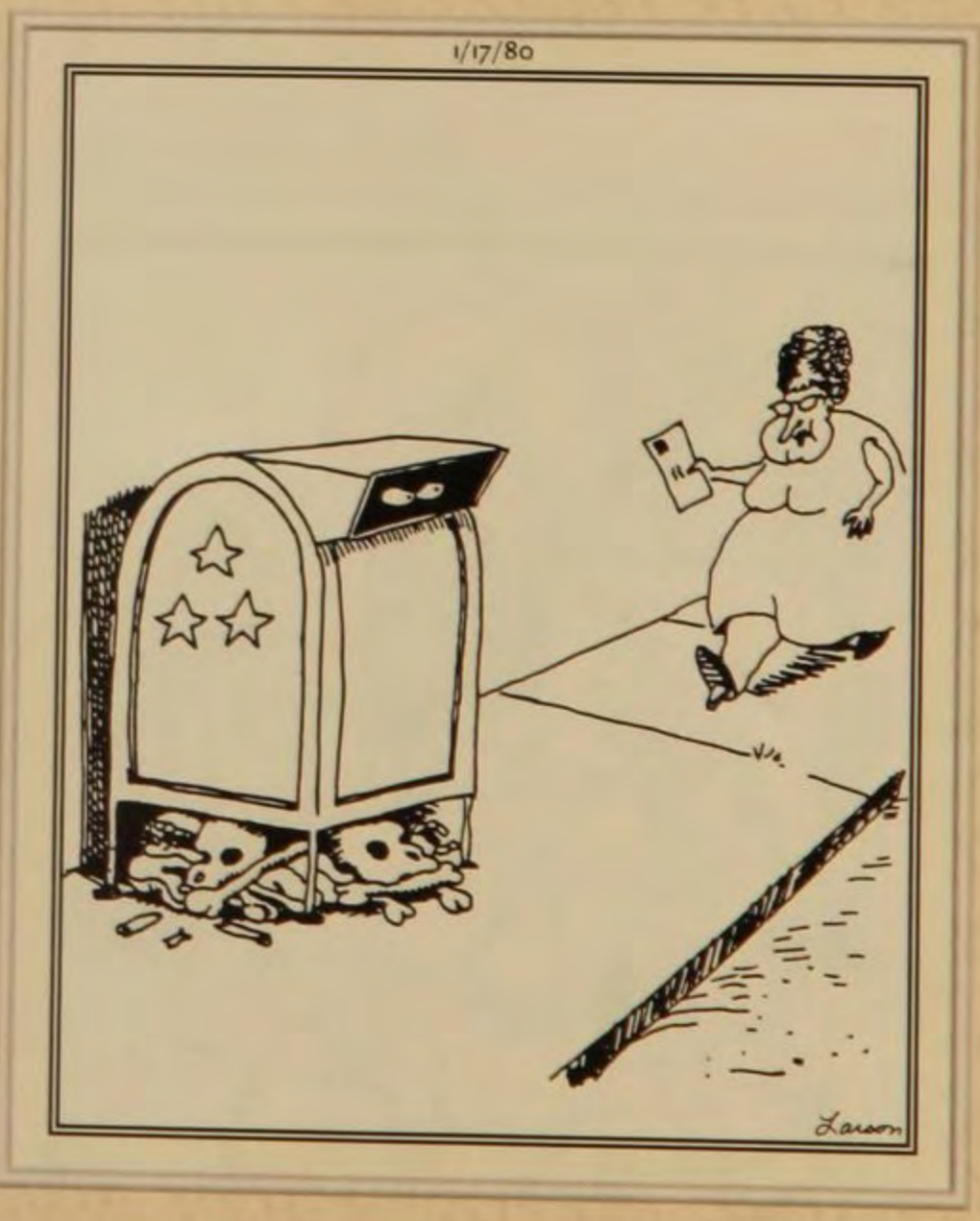
1/12/80

"Egad! ... What a hideous creature!"

January 1980

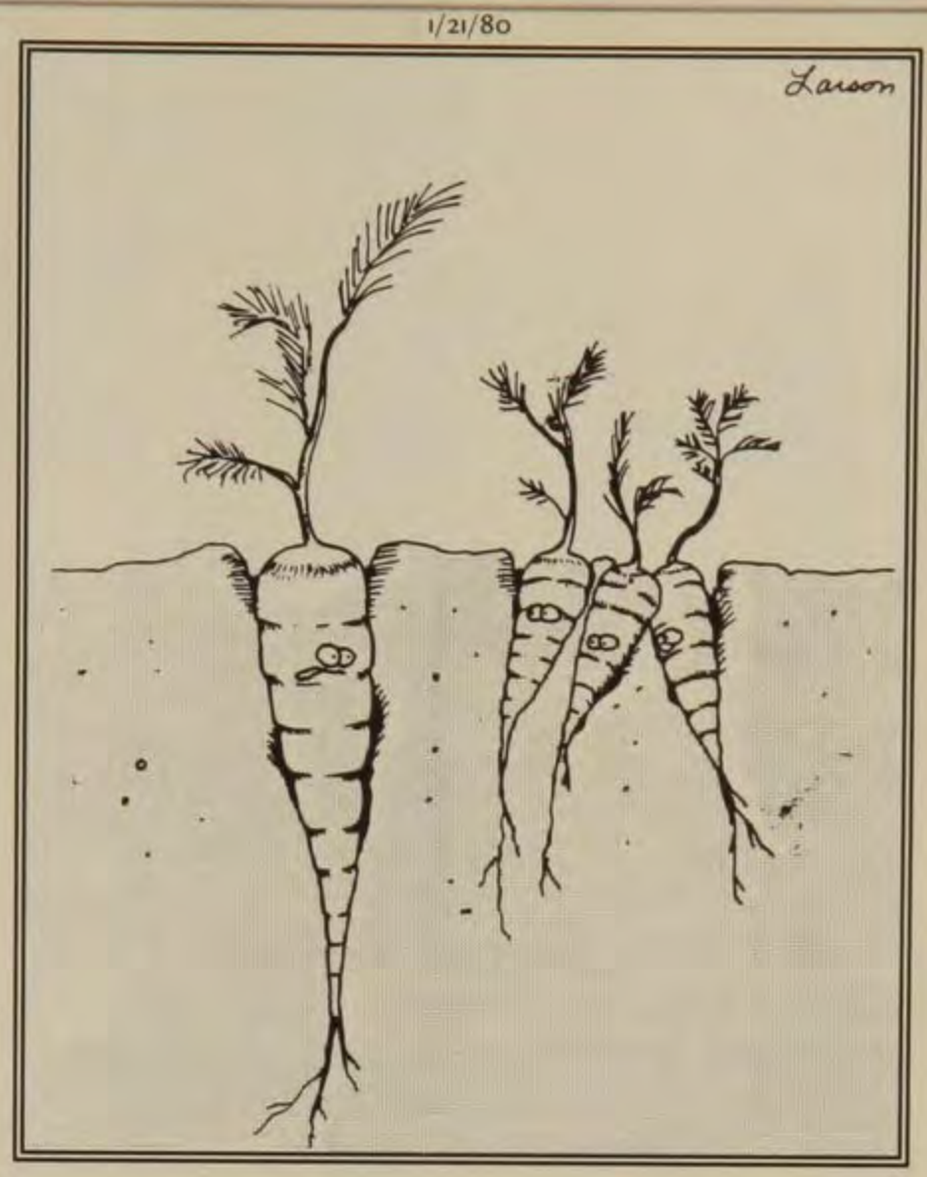
"Something's wrong. ... Reel up and check the bait."

"Next!"

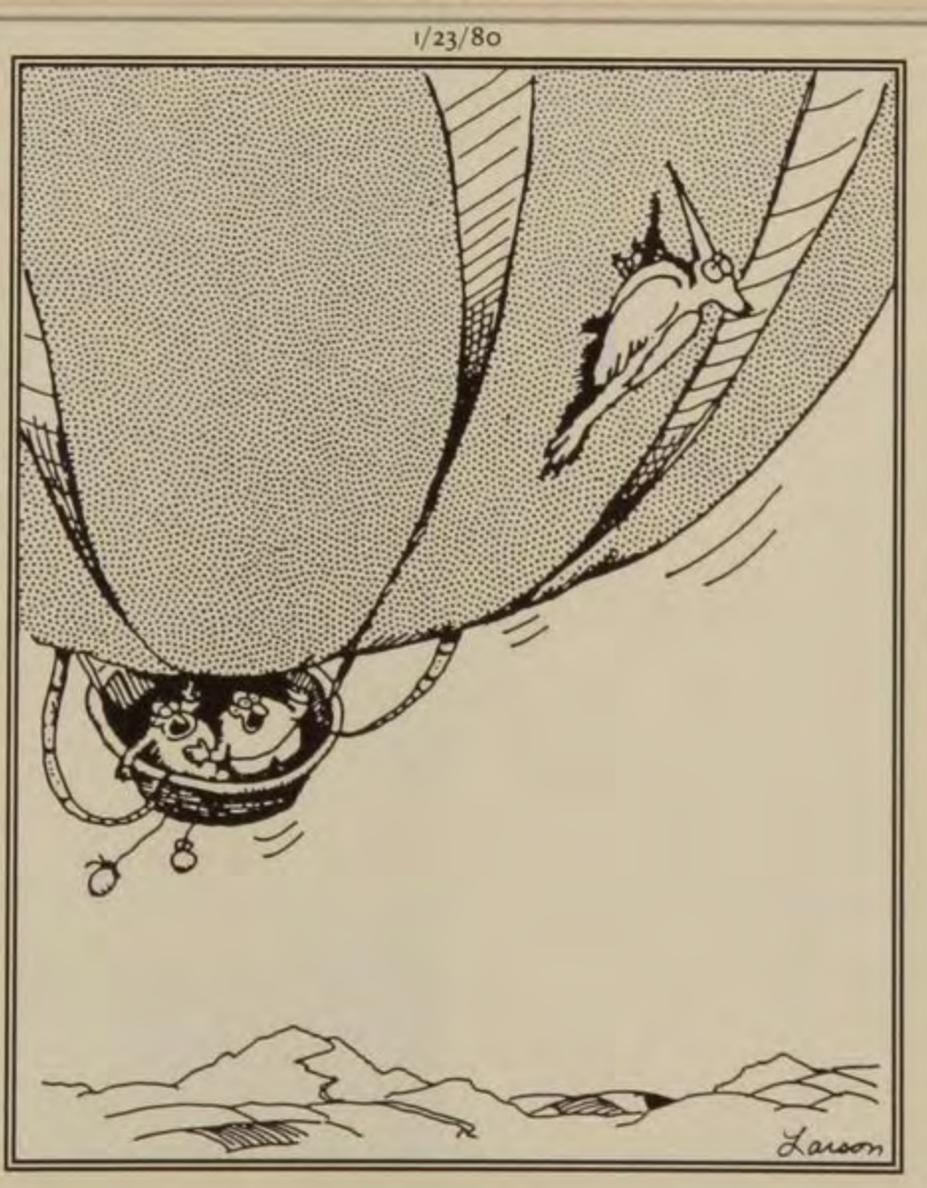


January 1980

"And so I ask the jury—is that the face of a mass murderer?"



"... And then the creatures yanked him out of the ground, skinned him alive, boiled him, and ate him. The end. *Now go to sleep!*"



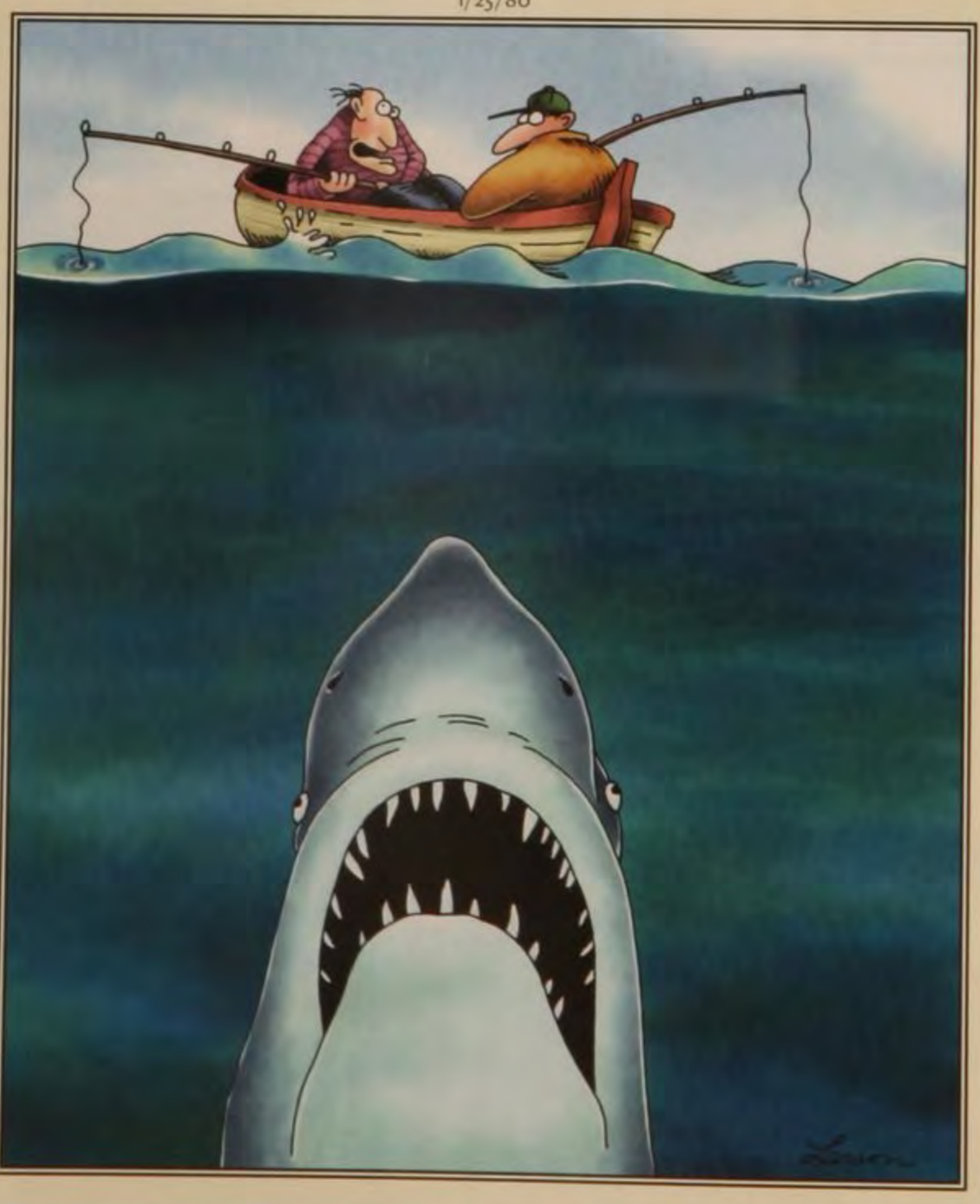
January 1980

1/24/80

"All right, let's see ... which one's the 'Viva la Vegetarian' and which one's the 'Prime Rib Papa'?"

1/28/80

1/25/80



"There it goes again ... that eerie music."

January 1980

1/30/80

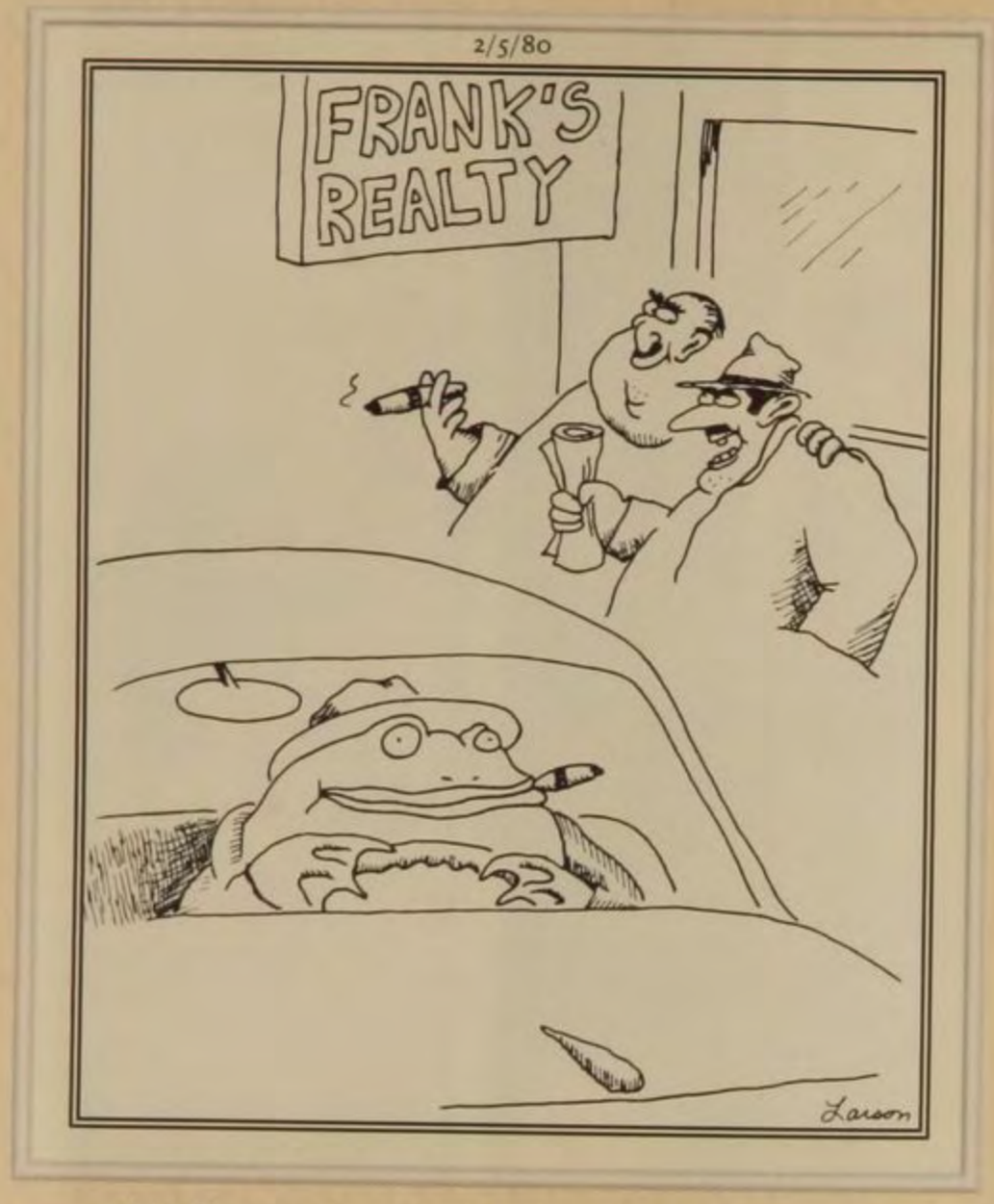
"Nighty-night, dear, sleep tight ... and don't let the bedbugs bite."

1/29/80

"And don't you flare your nostrils at me, either!"

1/31/80

February 1980



"Well, another sucker just bought twenty acres of swampland."

"We'll be eating in tonight."

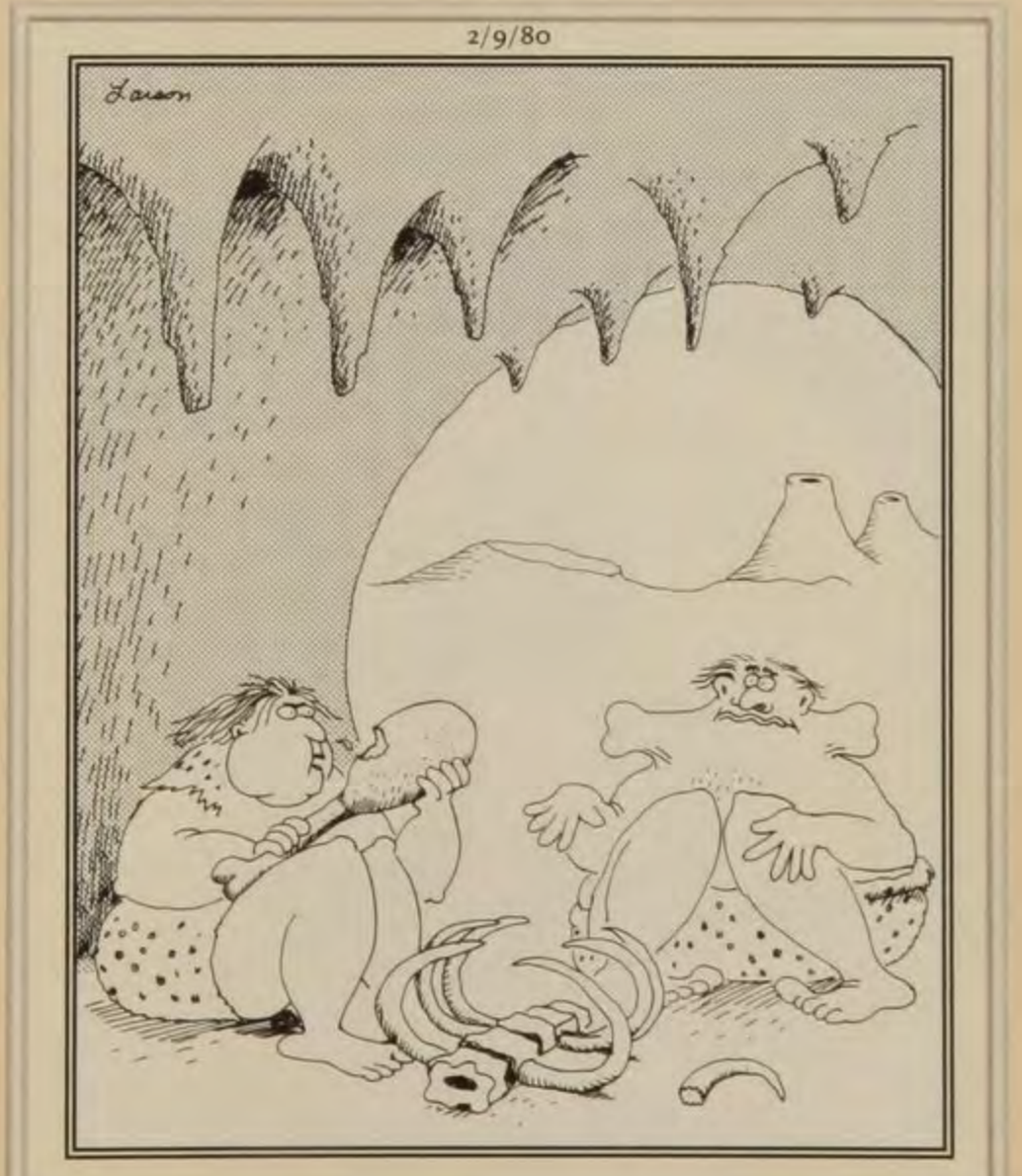
"Hang on! I'm changing!"

February 1980

"... and this must be the little woman."

"Gee, Mom! Andy was just showing us how far he could suck his lip into the bottle!"

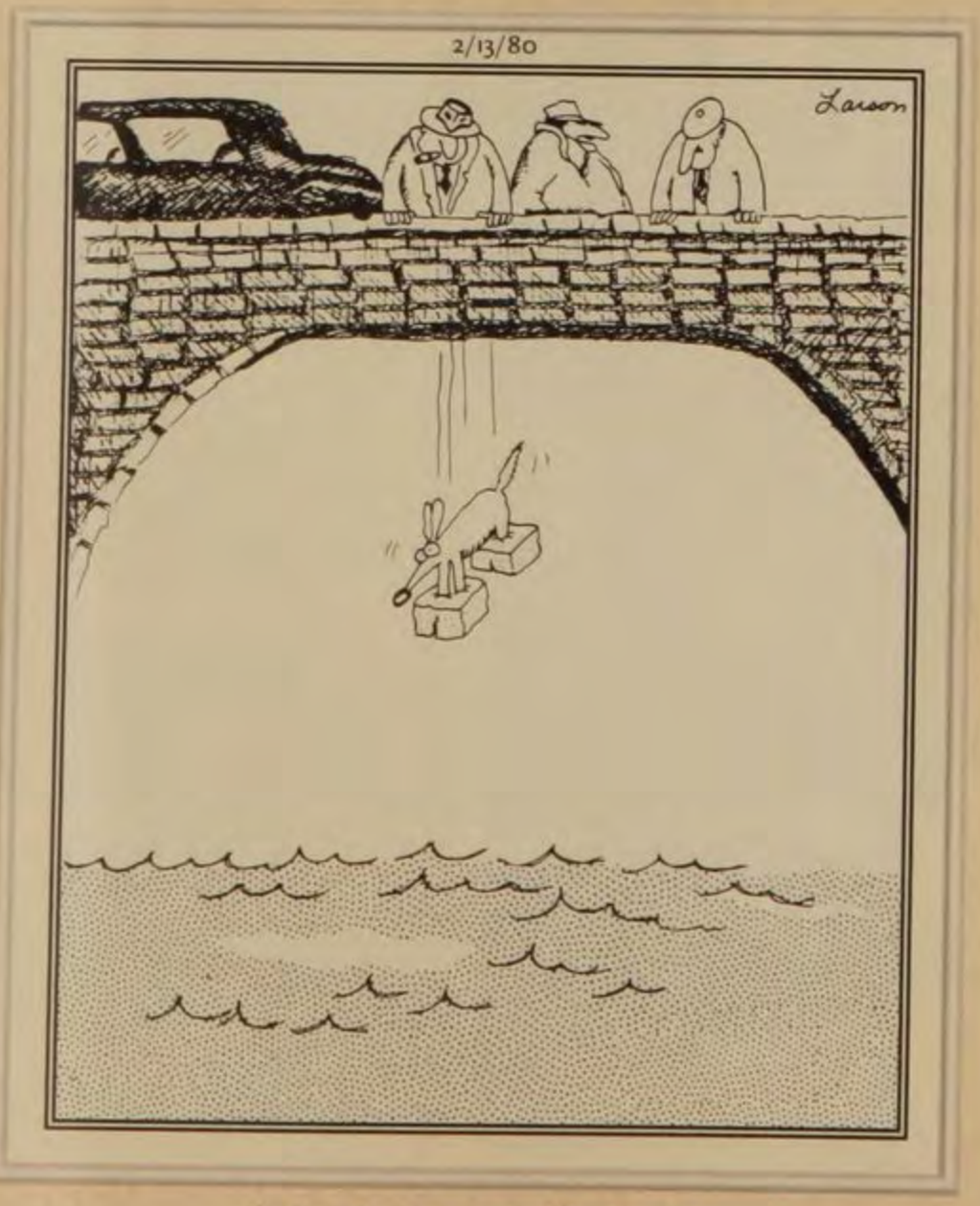
"Hey! They're edible! ... This changes everything!"



"I told you to watch for bones."

February 1980

"But what if he hits the apple?"

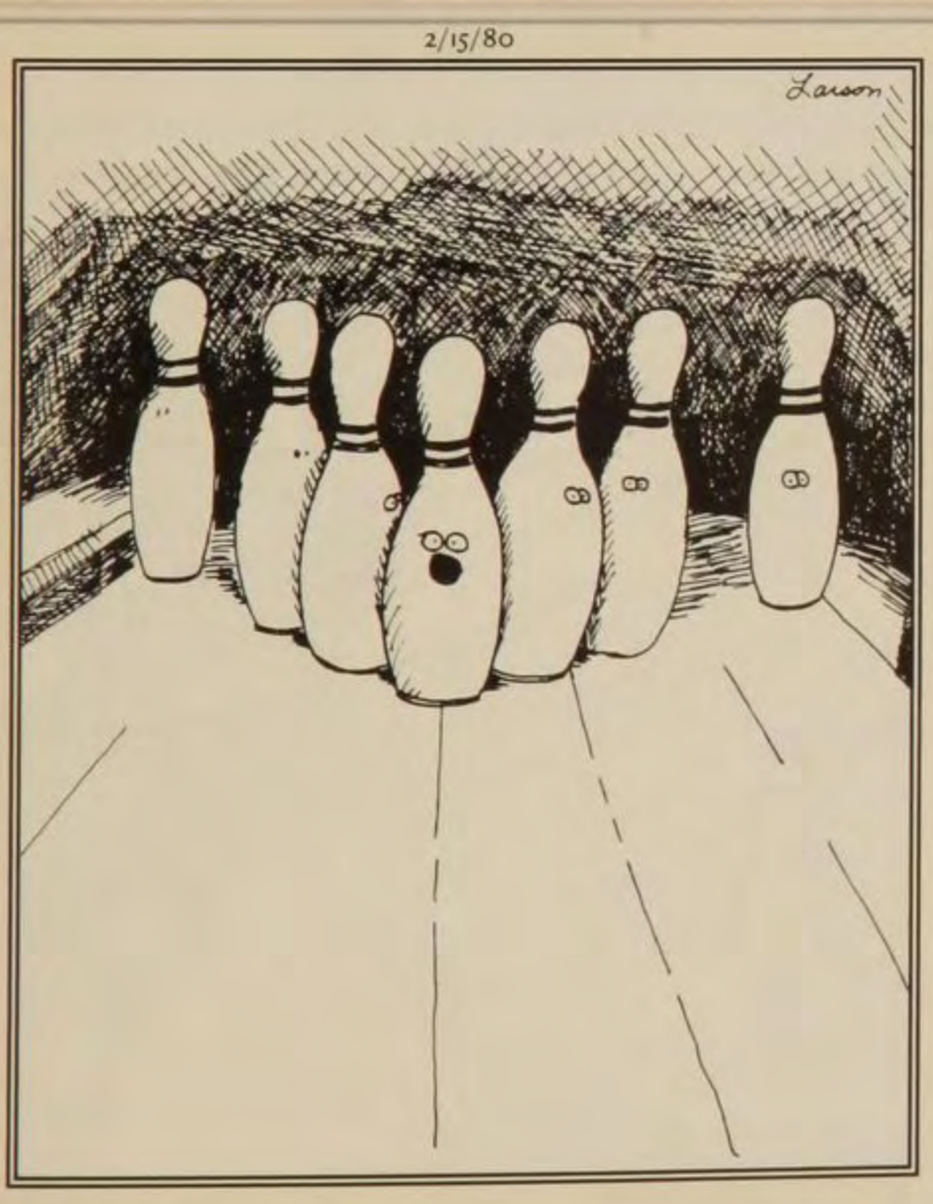


"He bit the Godfather."

"That does it! ... I'm going to go up there and give those people *hell!*"

February 1980

"'H,' please ... for *both* of us."



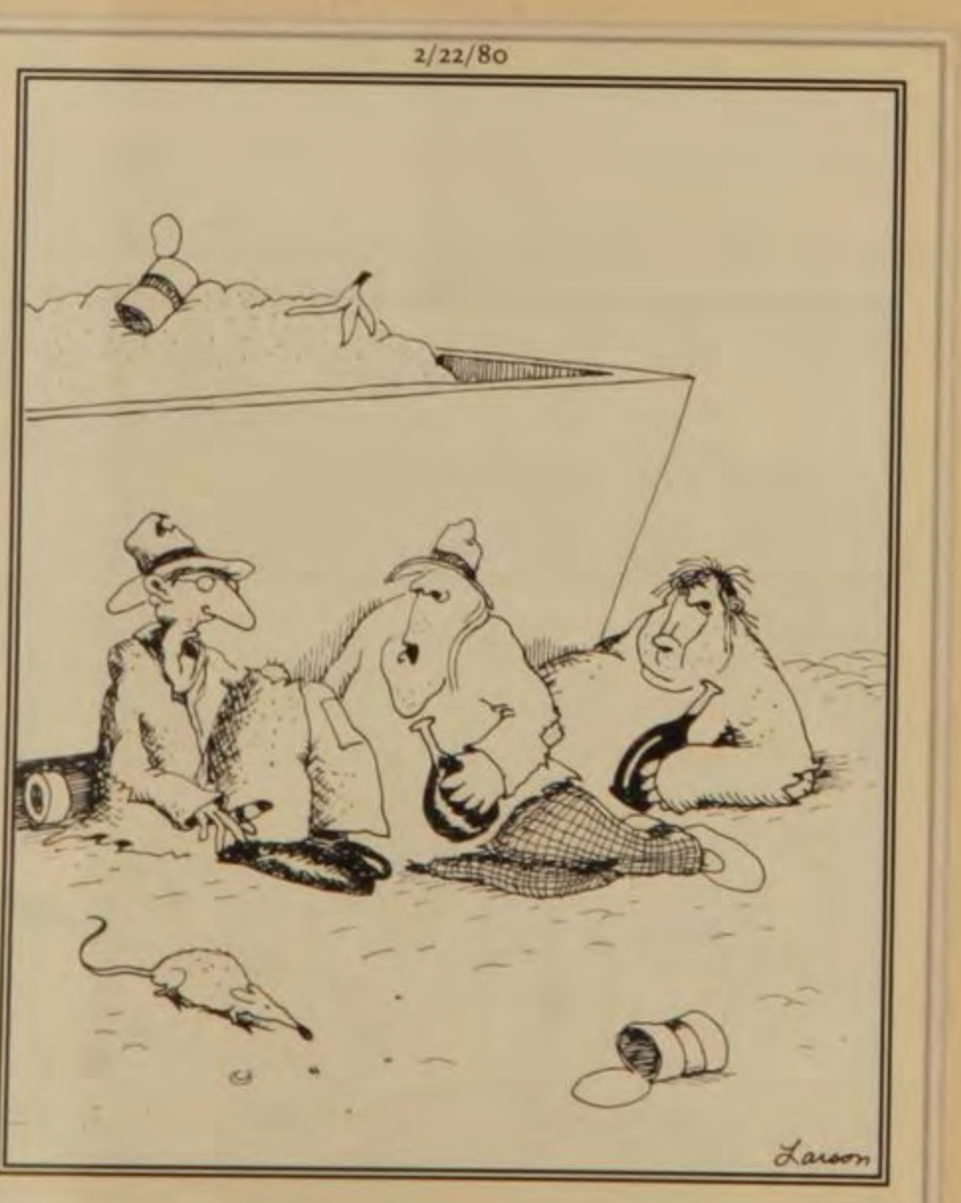
"My God! ... Here it comes again!"

"Old McDonald *had* a farm, eeyi-eeyi-yo ..."

February 1980

"Mother was right—you're nothing but an old goat."

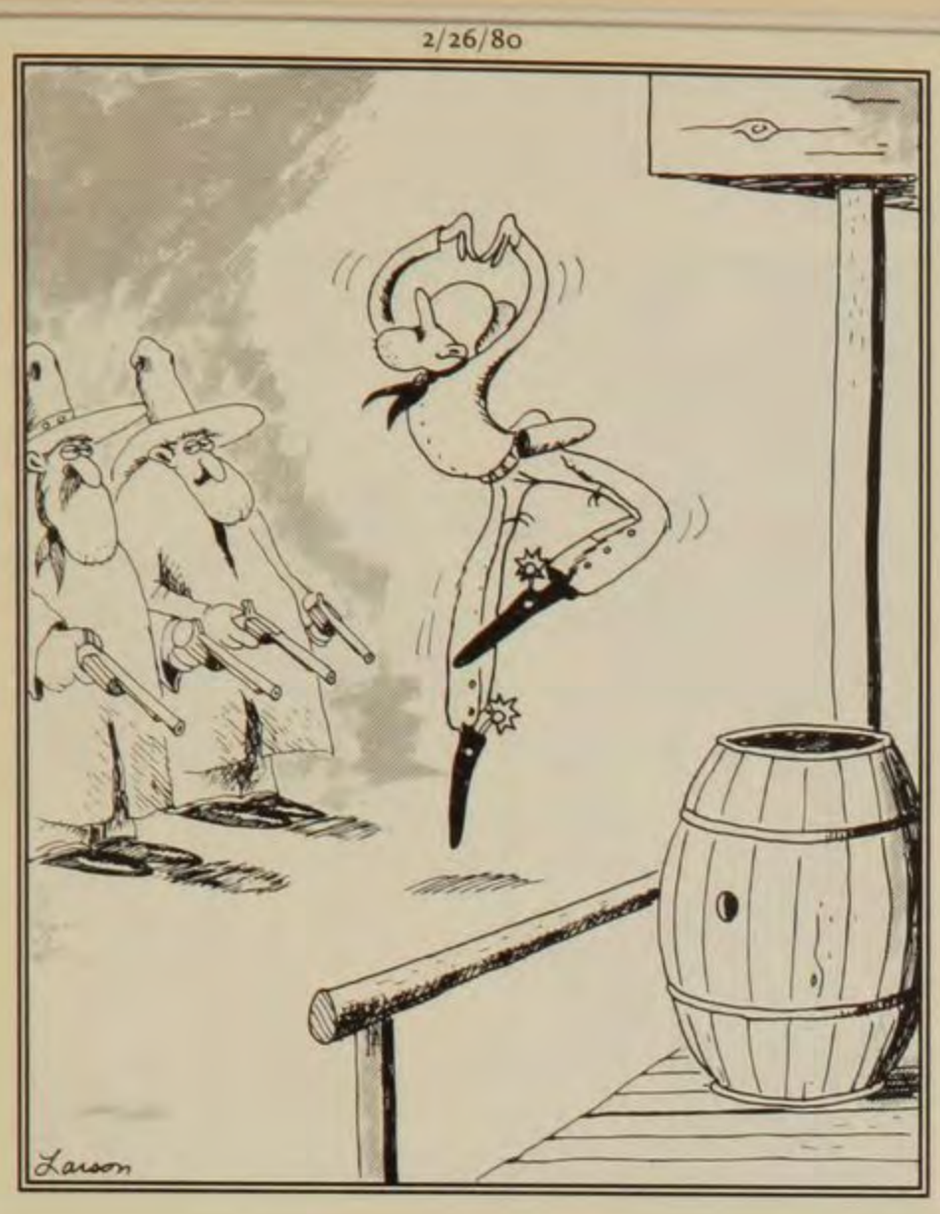
"Incredible you say? But true, ladies and gentlemen! ... *He has only one head!*"



"Excuse me, but must you smoke that foul thing around here?"

"GET A ZORB!"

February 1980



"He's makin' a fool of us, Bart."

"And I tell ya ... the next trail drive I sign onto, I'm readin' the fine print!"

March 1980

3/3/80

"It's back!"

3/4/80

"Gad! ... Not *these* Indians again!"

3/5/80

"And so I've reached the conclusion, gentlemen, that the Wonker Wiener Company is riddled with incompetence."

3/7/80

"Get a hold of yourself! ... It was only a movie, for crying out loud!"

March 1980

3/12/80

"It's the call of the wild."

3/13/80

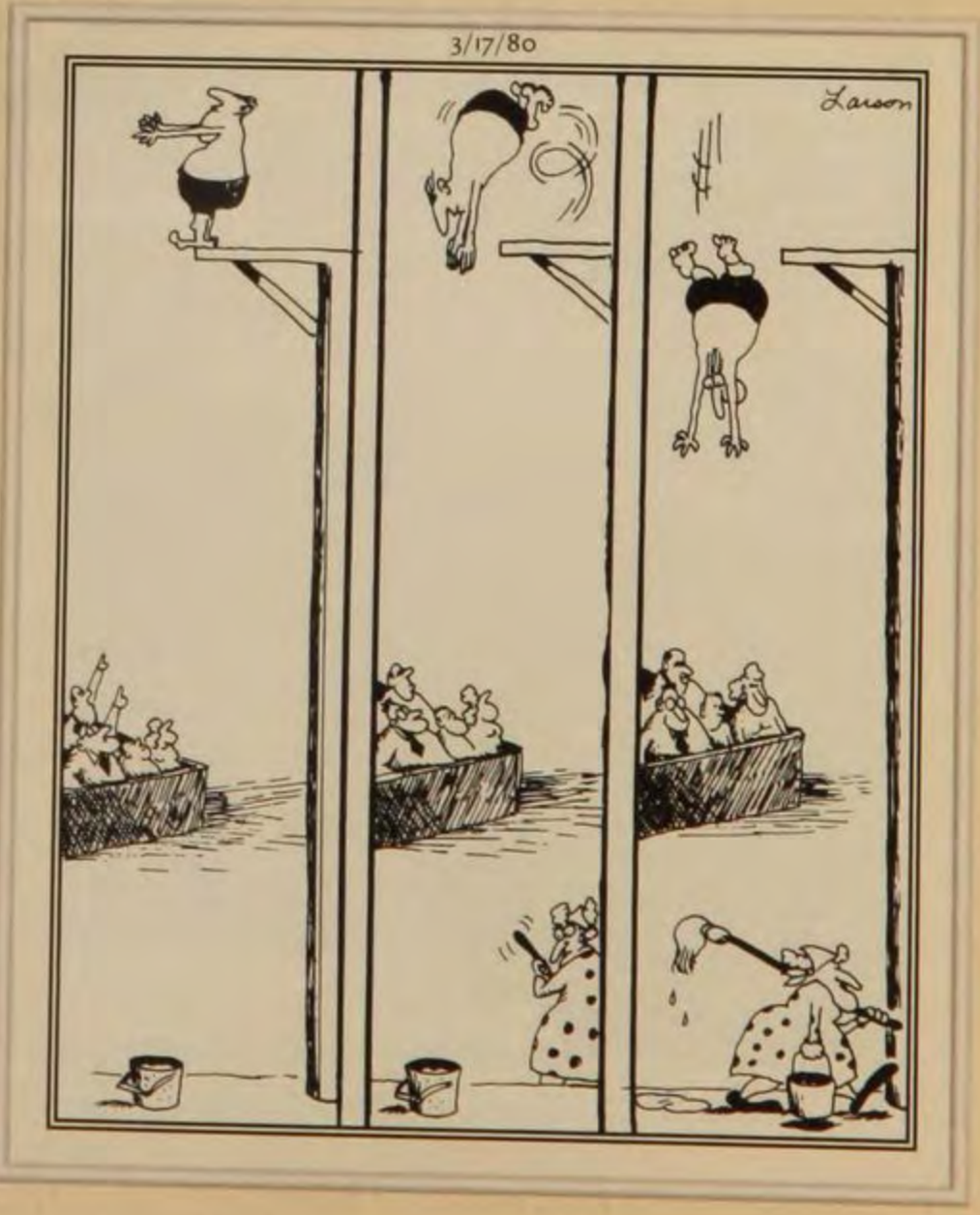
"It seems that agent 6373 has accomplished her mission."

3/11/80

"... and then the second group comes in—'row, row, row your boat'..."

March 1980

"HANGMAN! ... You lose!"



March 1980

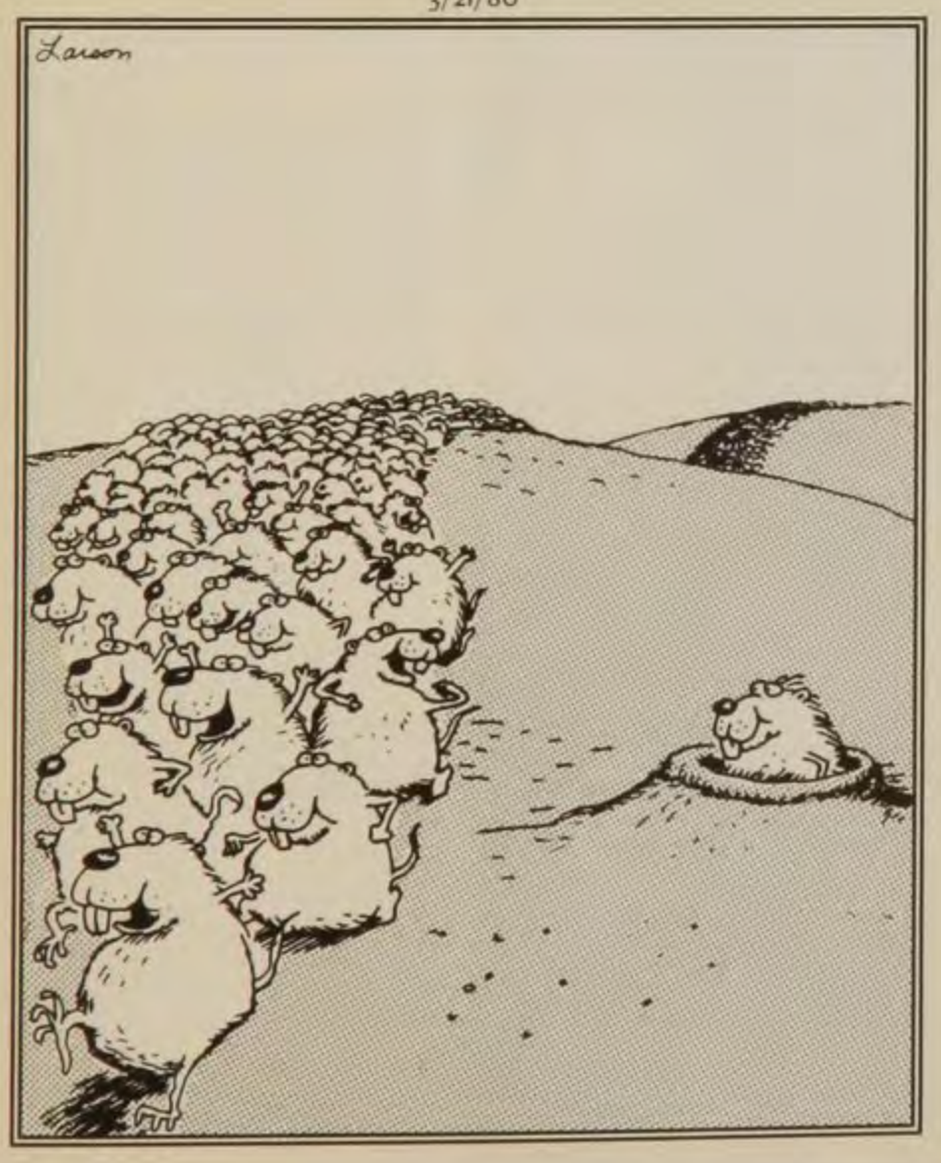
3/18/80

"*Now* you've done it!"

3/20/80

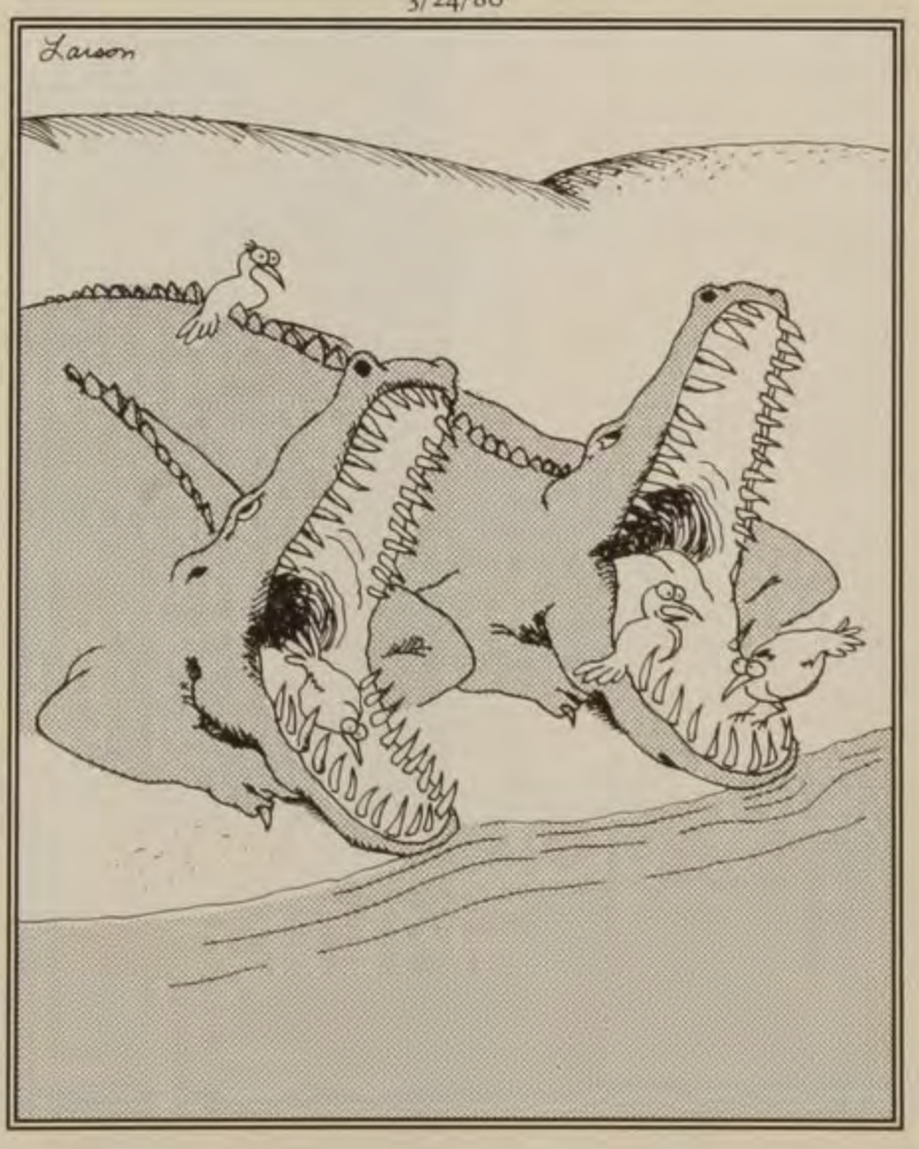
"We just listed it. ... Some young punks vandalized the place and cooked the owner."

3/21/80



"C'mon! You'll miss the fun! ... All the lemmings are going down to the beach!"

3/24/80



"Food's okay ... I just can't get used to the atmosphere."

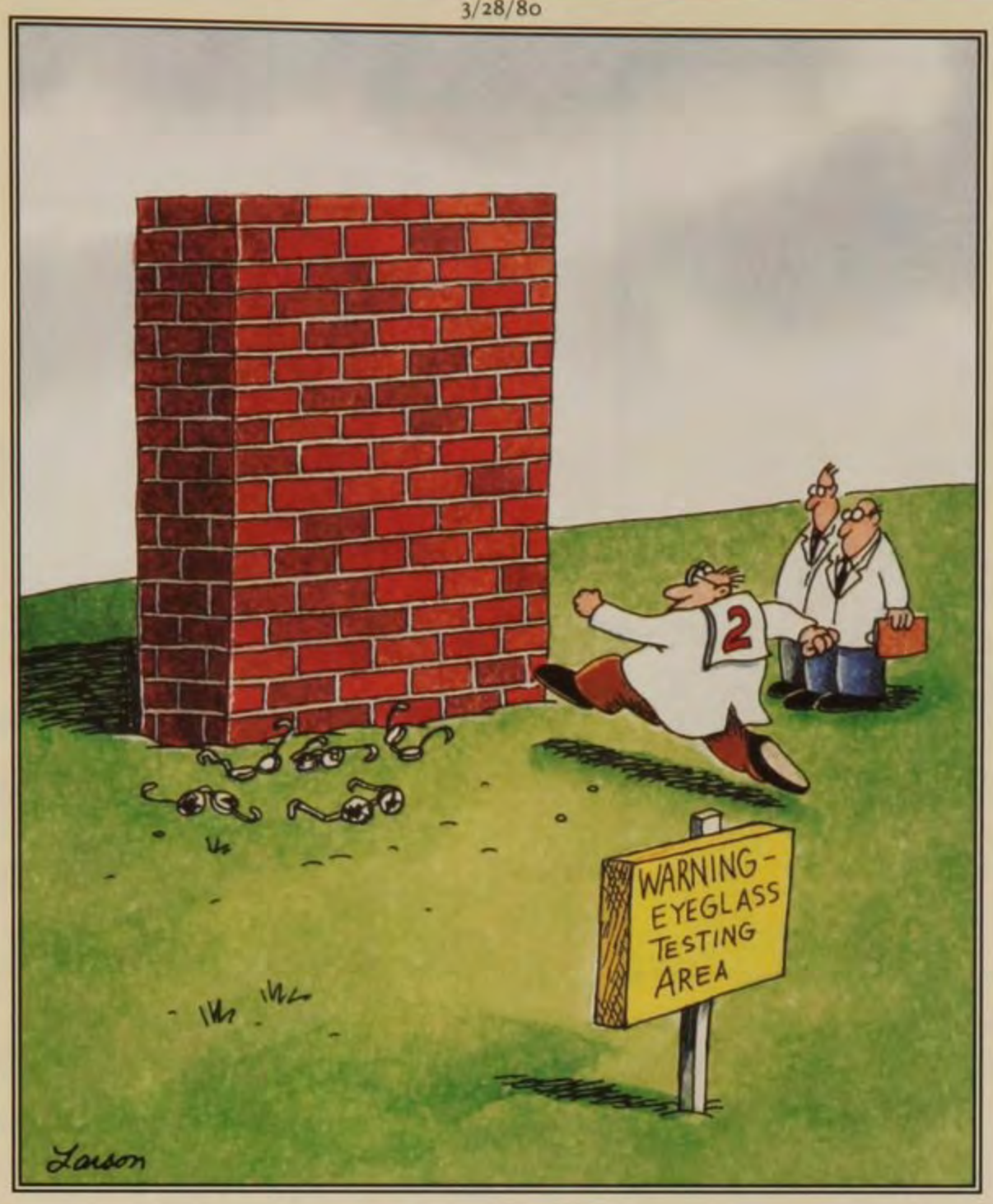
March 1980

"Say, Ernie ... that looks like Sally across the street. ... And she's with some guy."

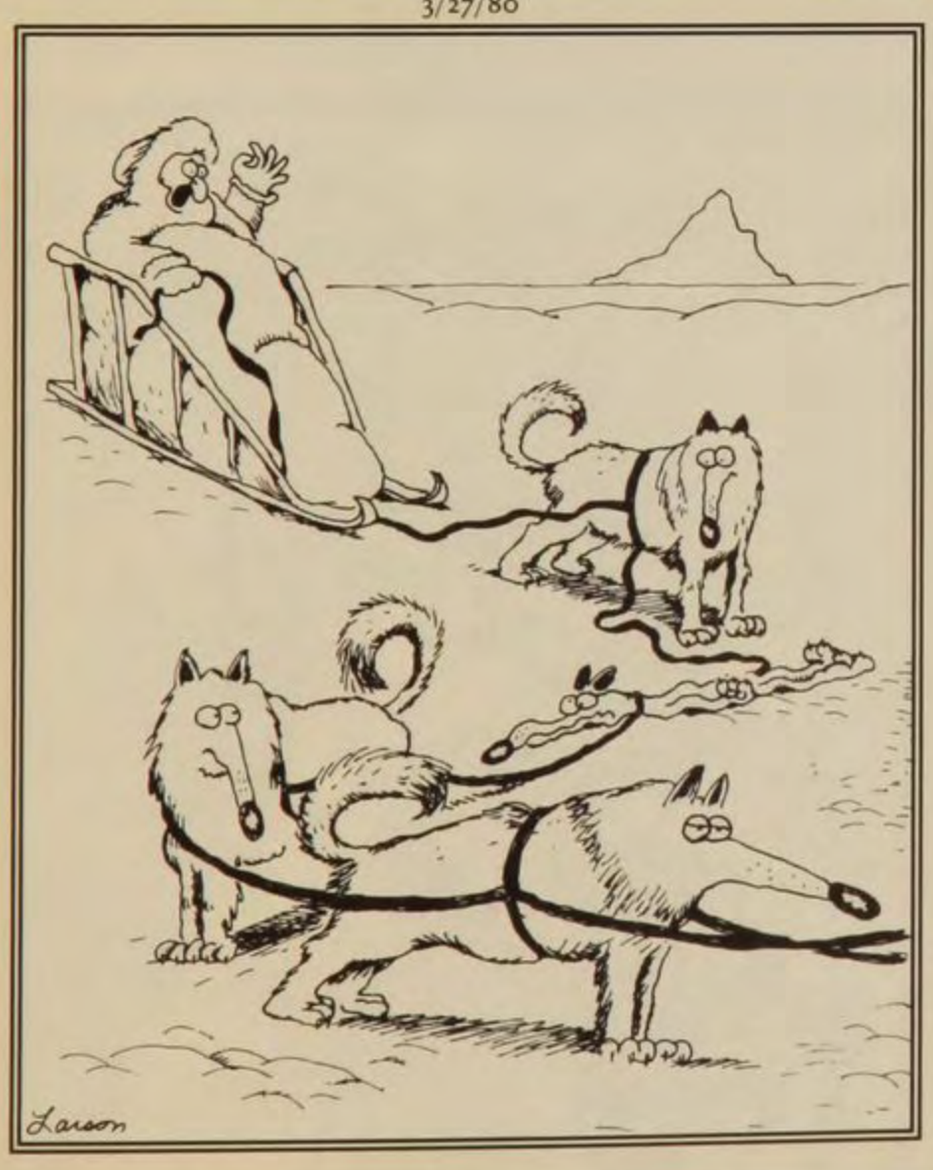
"I got a bad feeling about this, Harriet."

March 1980

3/28/80

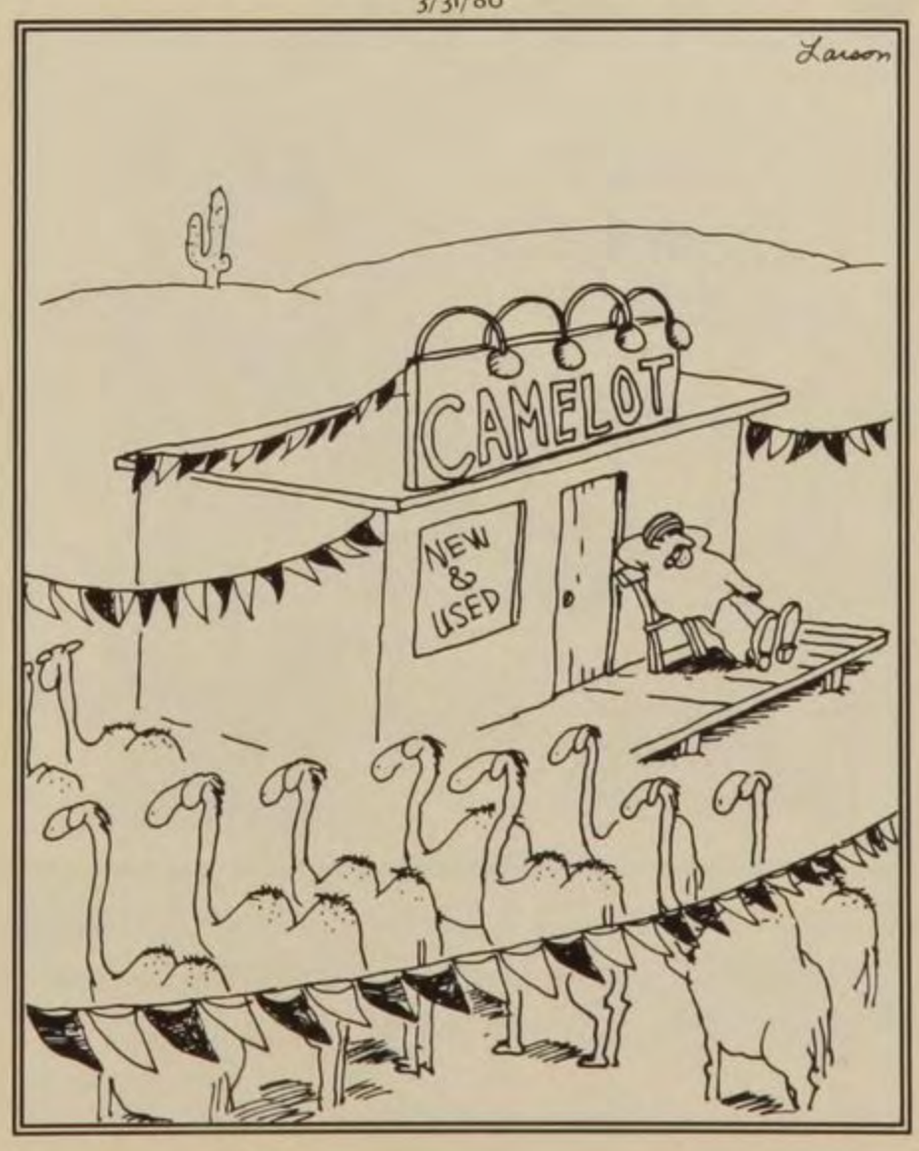


3/27/80



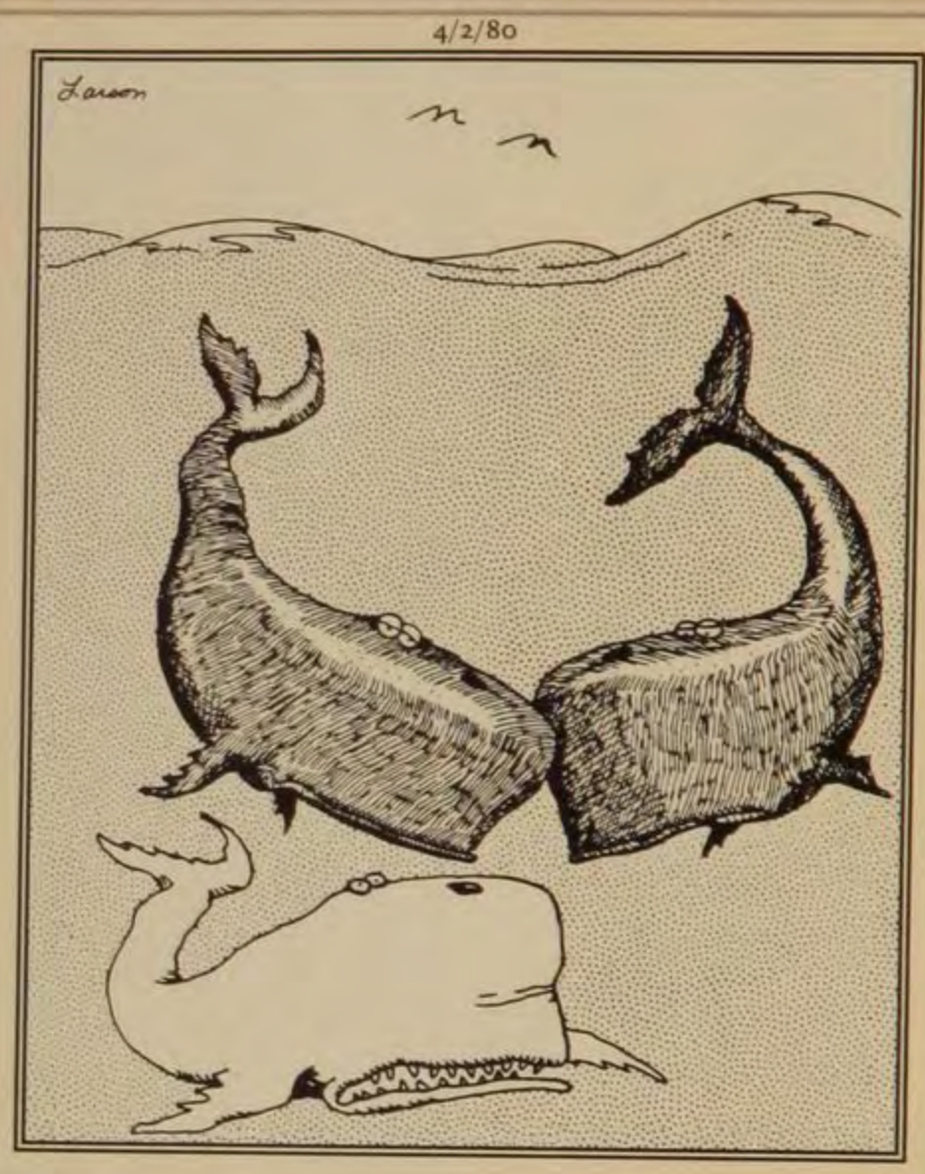
"Egad! ... Another flat!"

3/31/80



April 1980

"I don't care if you don't like it! ... By God, you're gonna eat it!"

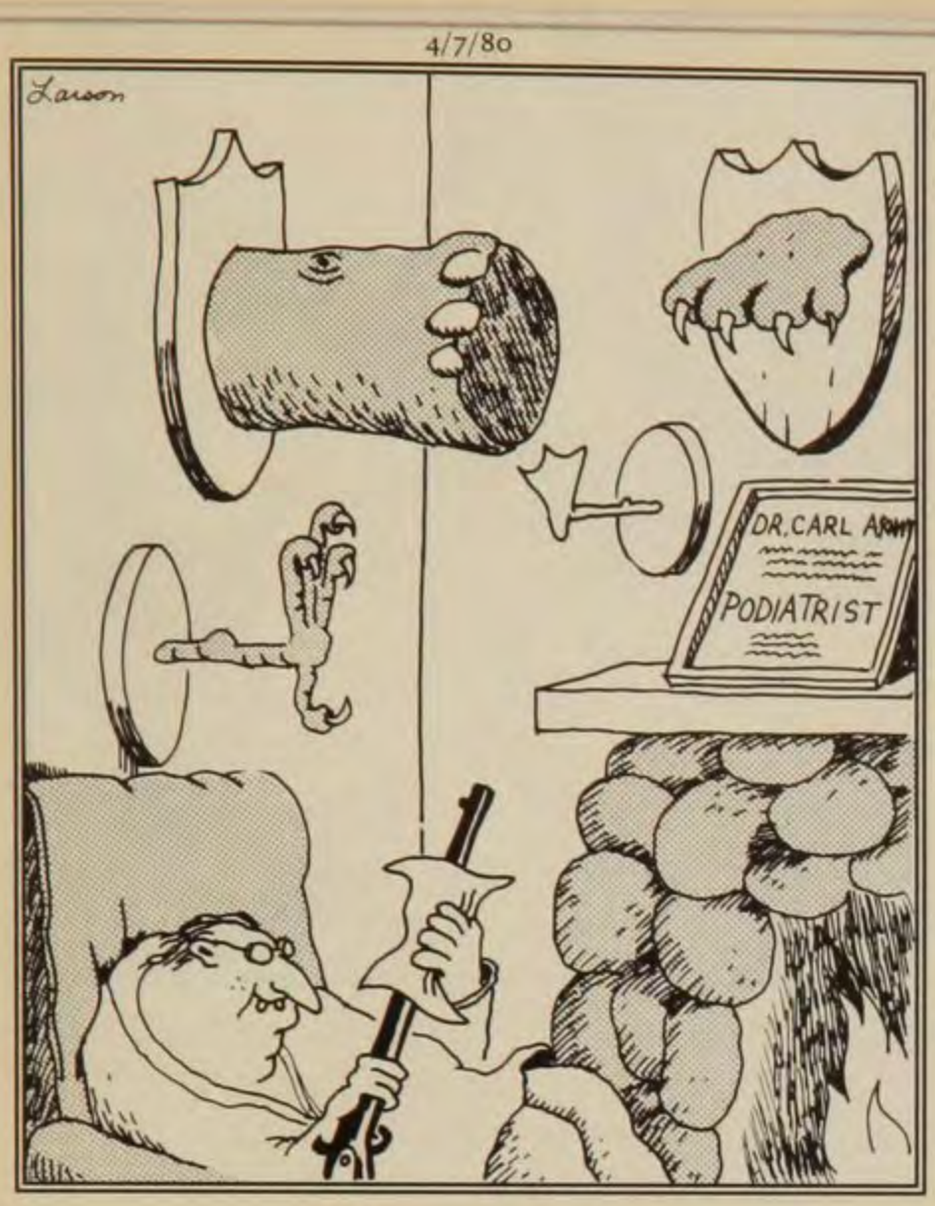


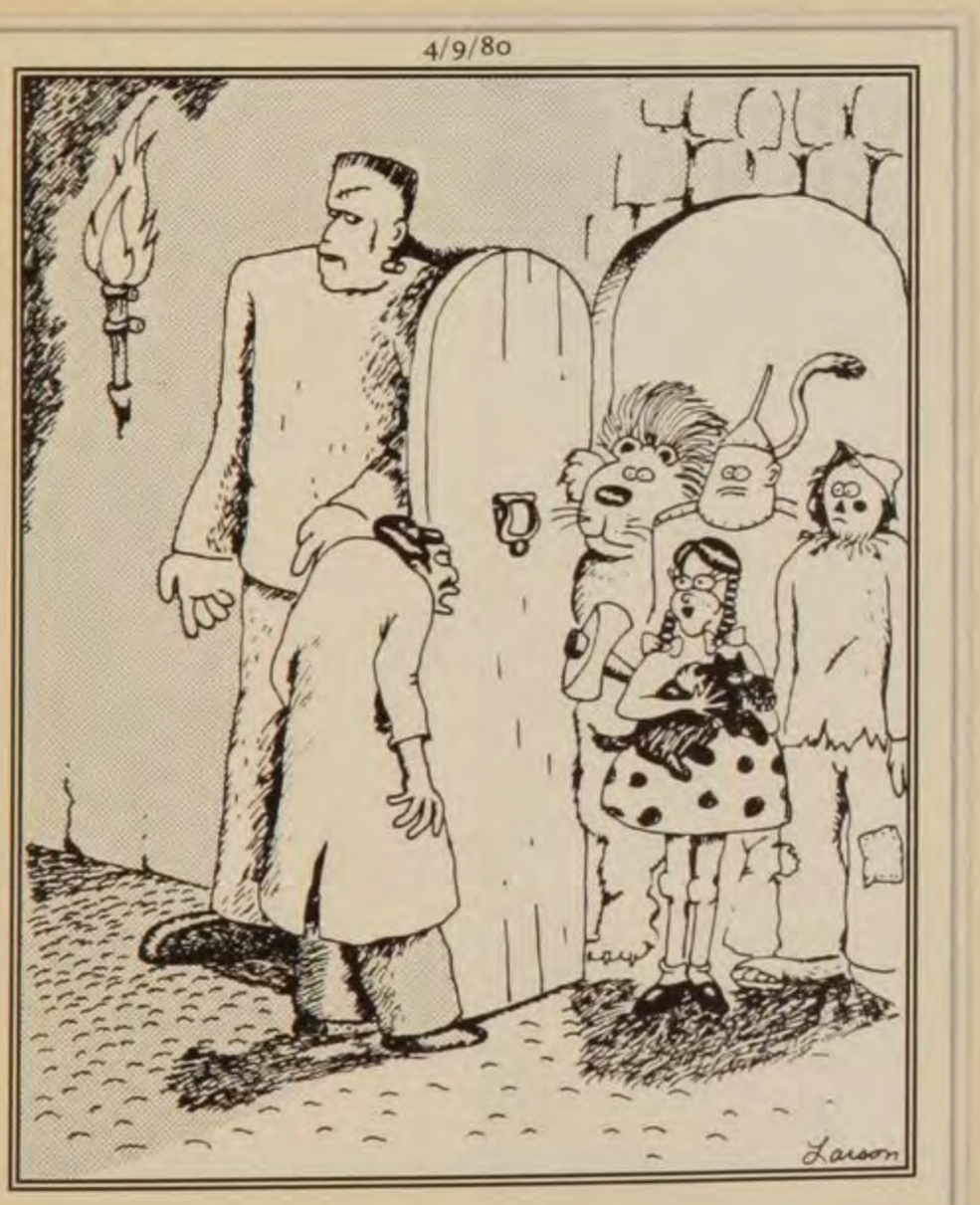
"I tell you he's up there! ... Those wild, sunken eyes! That horrid wooden leg! ... And he's looking for *me!*"

"Lousy food ... crummy service ... dinky cabins ... and that's only the tip of the iceberg!"

"I doubt if *they'll* ever reach the spawning grounds."

April 1980





"I'm sorry ... try the wizard up the road.
I just used my last heart and brain."

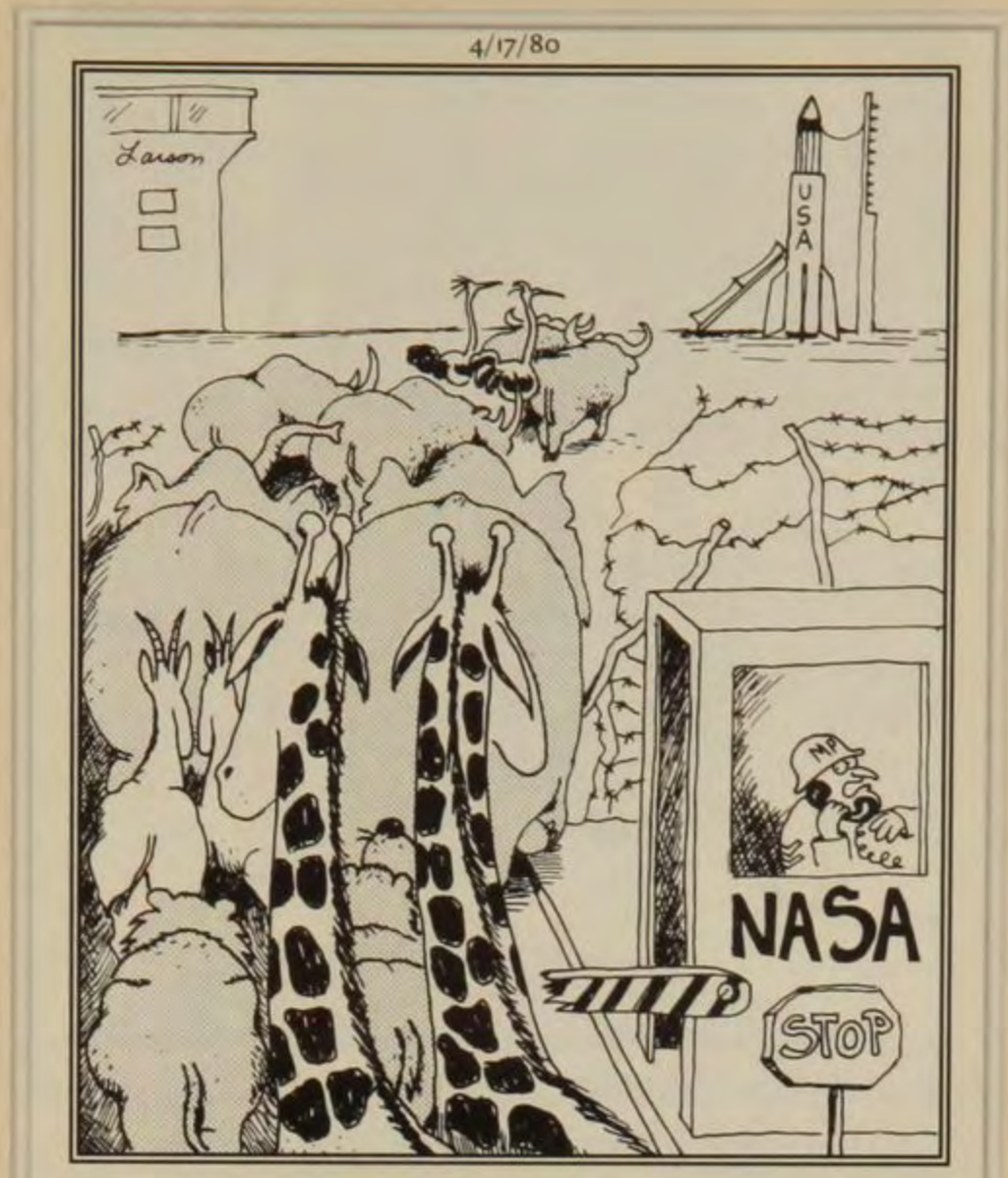
"Oh, Harold! Look! Porpoises!"

April 1980

"Most peculiar, Sidney ... another scattering of Cub Scout attire."

April 1980

"I can't believe it! ... I was just talking to him yesterday!"

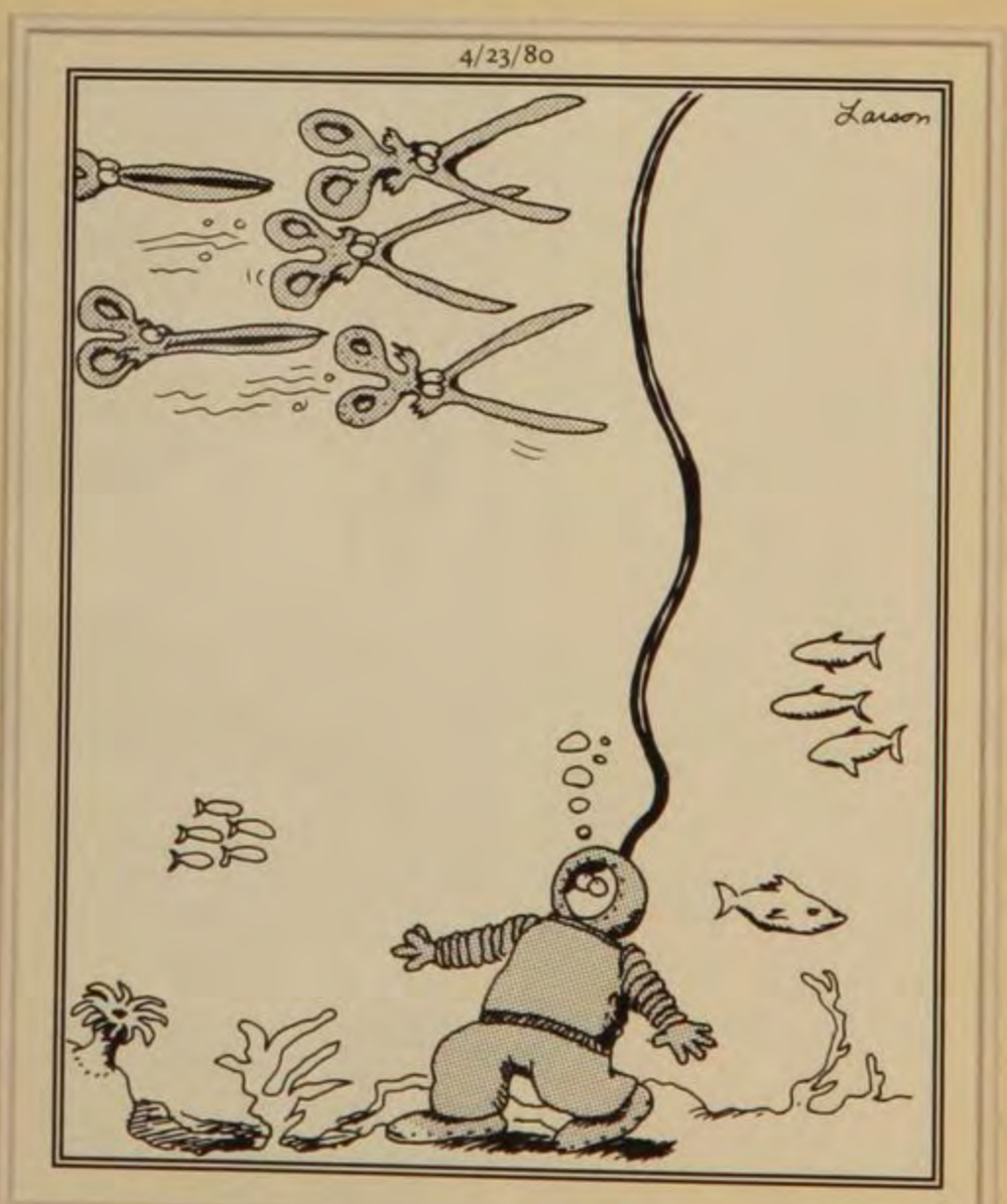


"Something big's going down, sir! ... They're heading your way now!"

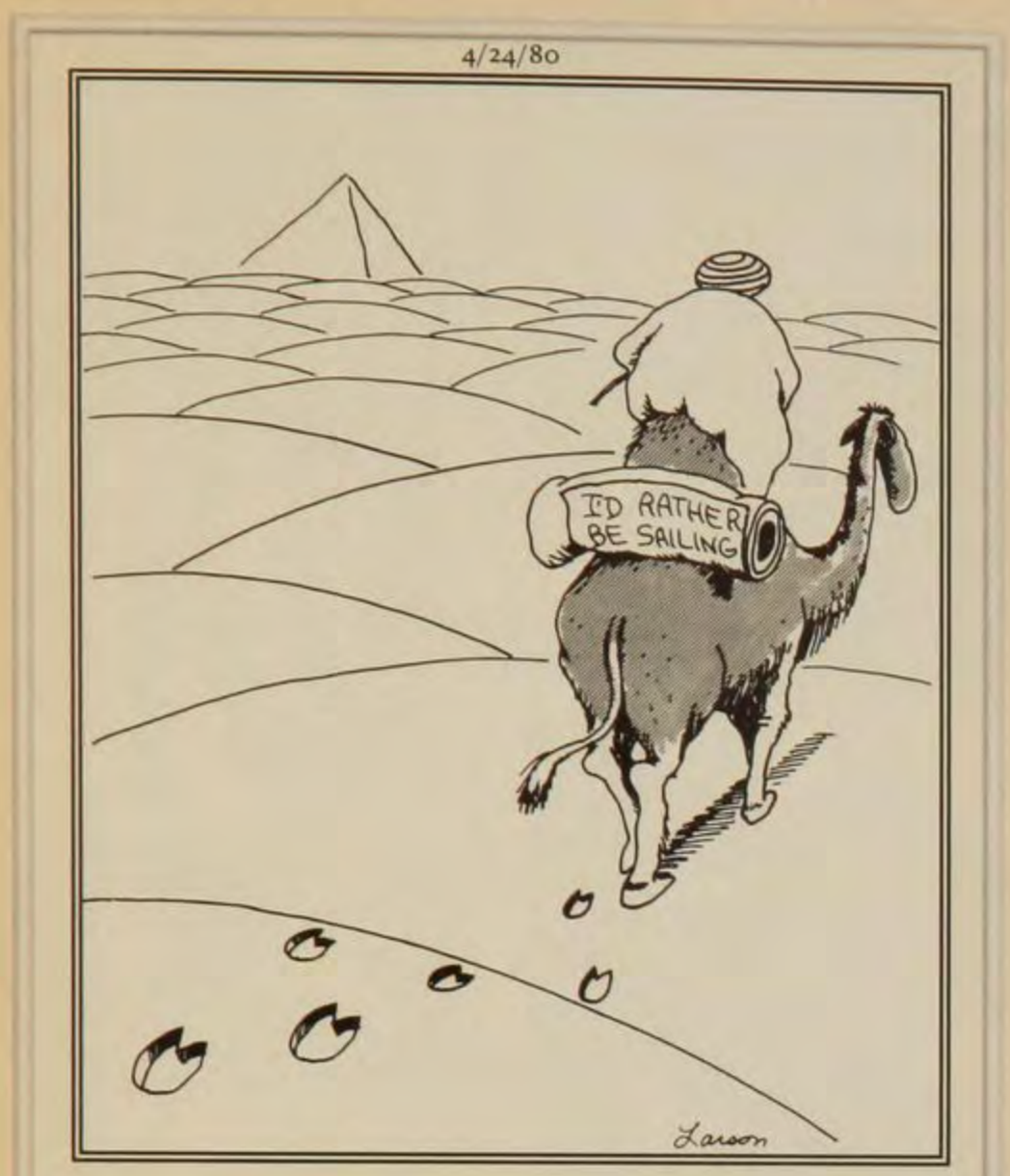
April 1980

"Okay, the sanatorium's on its way over ...
all we gotta do now is start talking to her."

"It certainly has taken the romance out of
the Bigfoot mystery."



April 1980



"Okay ... on the count of three, everybody rattles."

"Just look at this line! ... They'll never get me to come back here again!"

May 1980

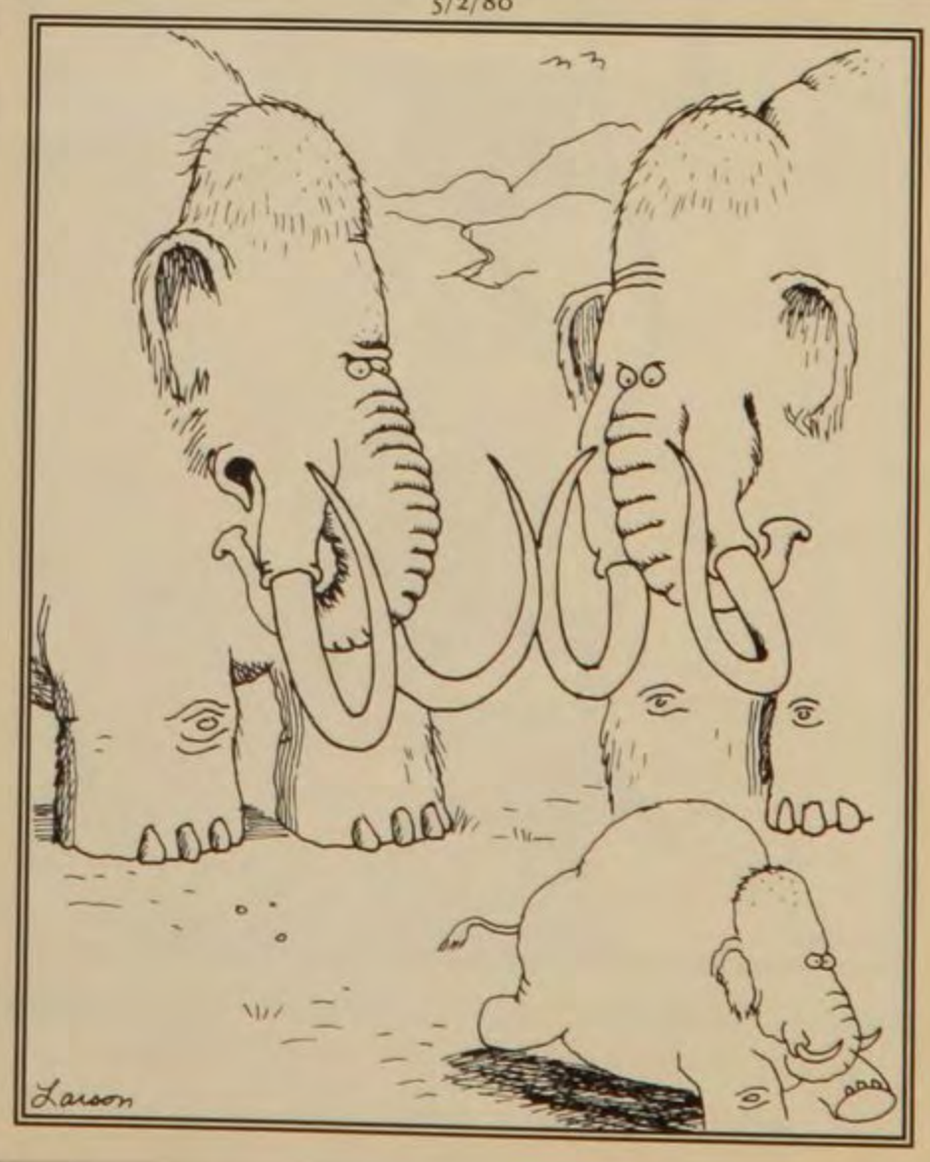
5/5/80

"We've got the murder weapon and the motive ... now if we can just establish time of death."

5/1/80

"So! The little sweethearts were going to carve their initials on me, eh?"

5/2/80



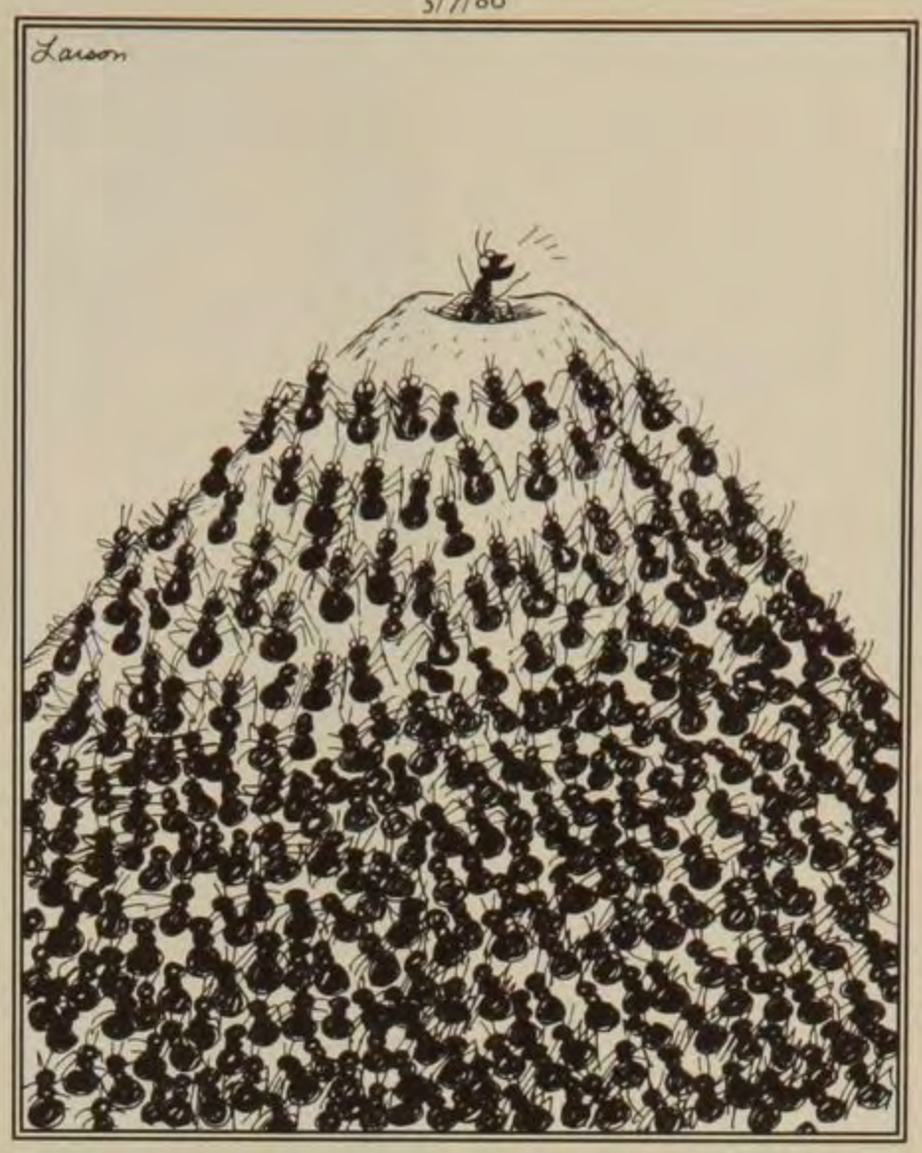
"All right. Run along and play ... and stay away from those tar pits!"

May 1980

5/6/80

"Thank God! Those blasted crickets have finally stopped!"

5/7/80

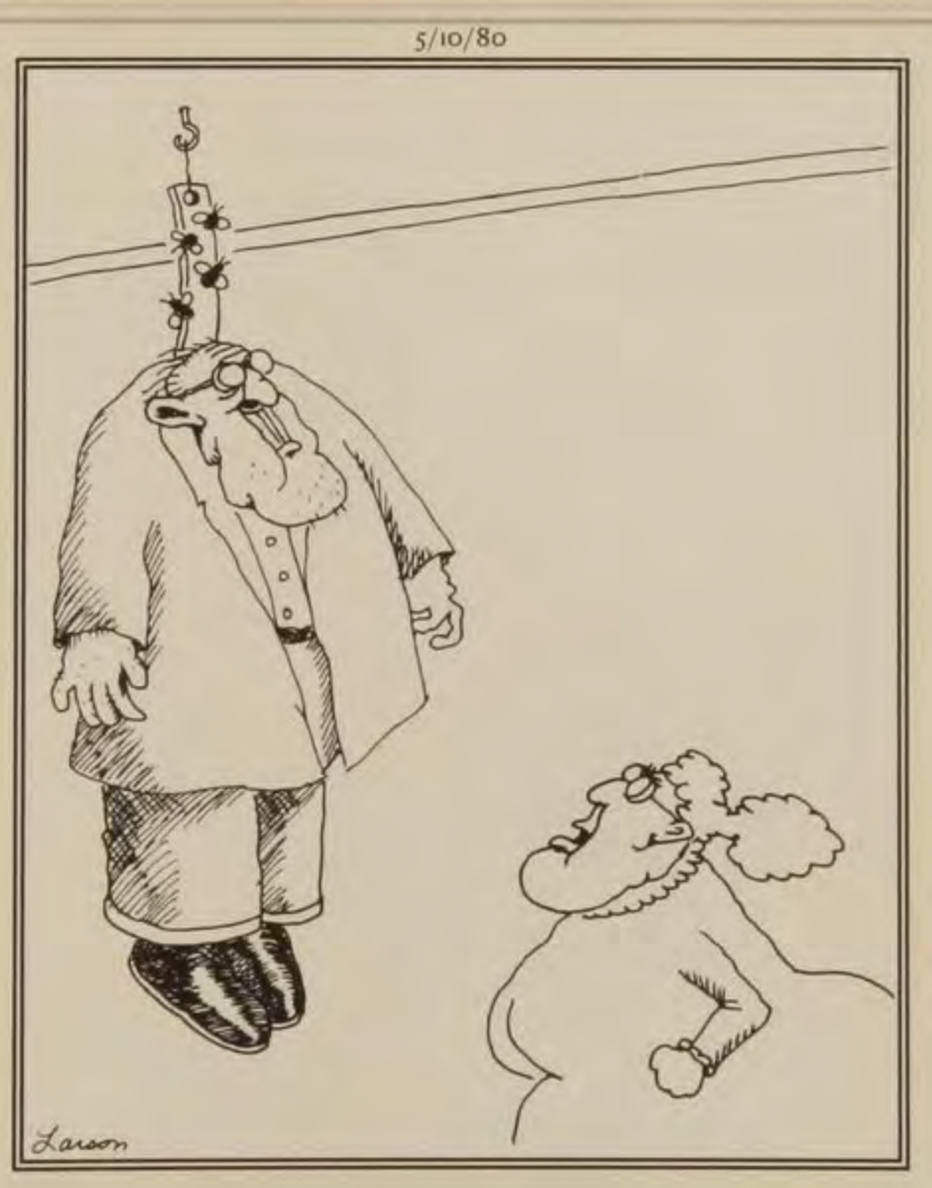


"And remember ... ask *not* what your anthill can do for you, but what you can do for your anthill."

5/9/80

"Ahhh ... the plot thickens."

5/10/80



"So! You've been buzzing around the living room again, haven't you?"

May 1980

5/8/80

"I used to be somebody ... big executive ... my own company ... and then one day someone yelled, 'Hey! He's just a big cockroach!'"

5/13/80

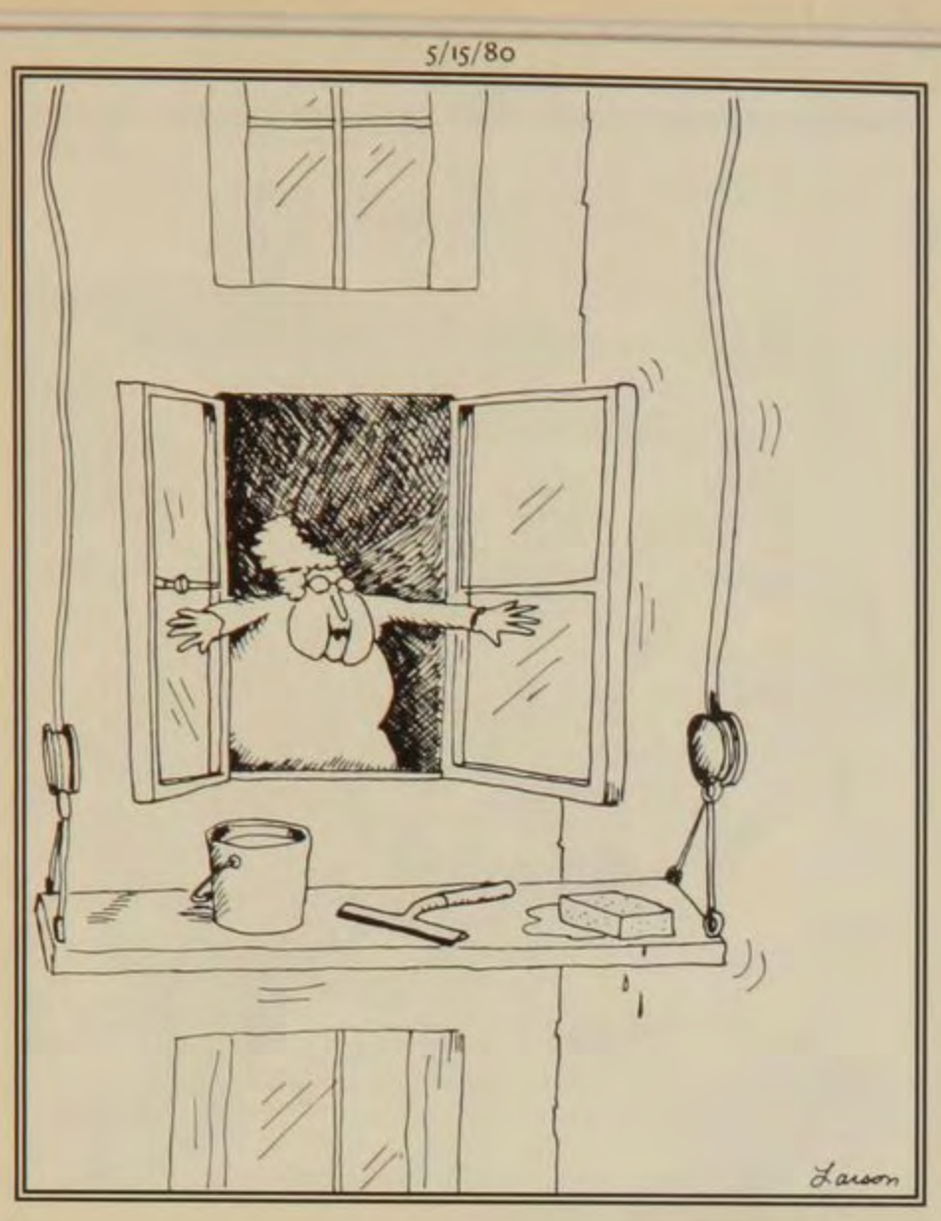
"Me? This year it was *your* turn to go up and sacrifice the goat!"

5/14/80

"Keep your eye on that guy. ... He hasn't said or bought a thing for over an hour."

May 1980

5/15/80



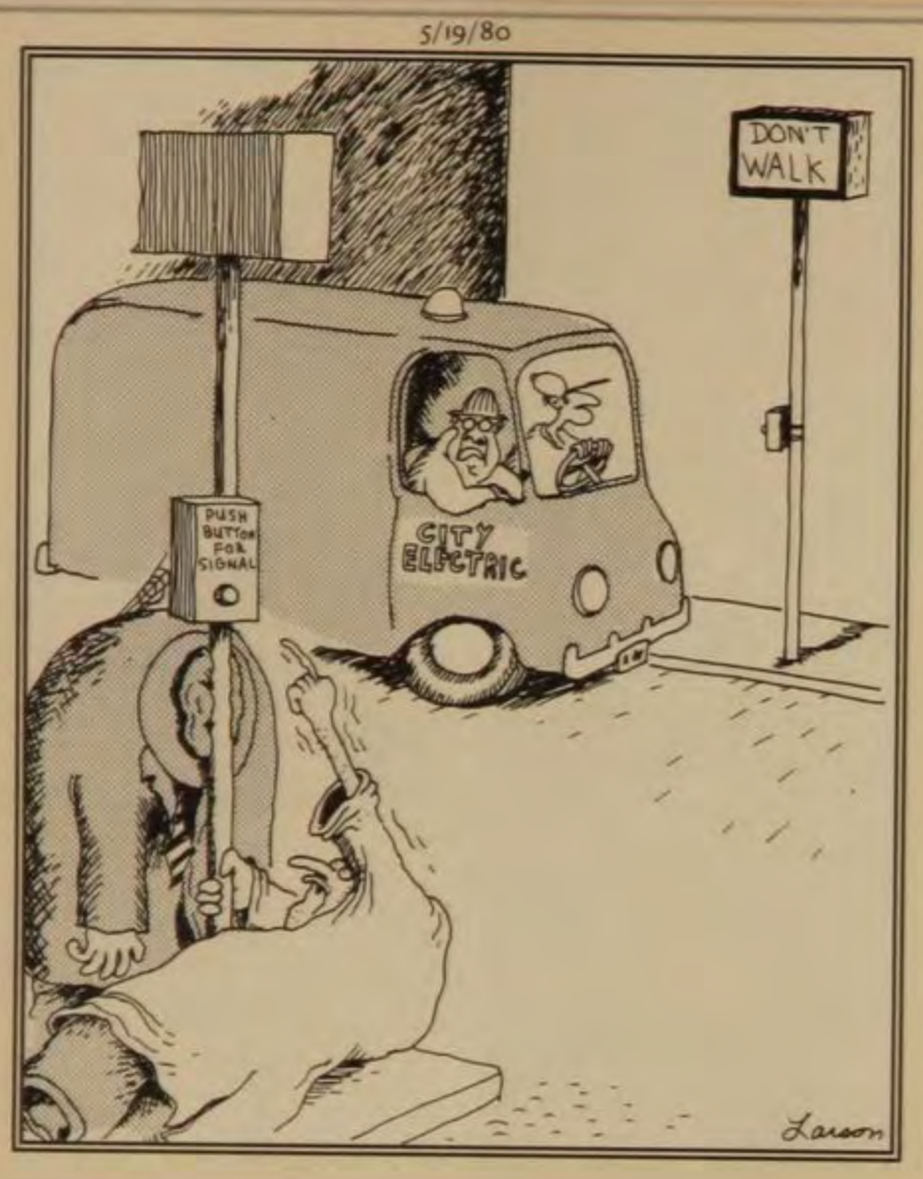
5/17/80

5/12/80

5/16/80

"Can I look now?"

May 1980



"This is the place, all right ... and it looks like it's been stuck on 'Don't Walk' for some time."

"Well, well, well—what do we have here? ... I do believe it's a broken taillight."

"Okay—those that want to call our new club 'The Buccaneers' raise their ... Hey! Who's the wise guy that keeps cracking his knuckles?"

"We've still got a couple of years to go before we're ready for the moon."

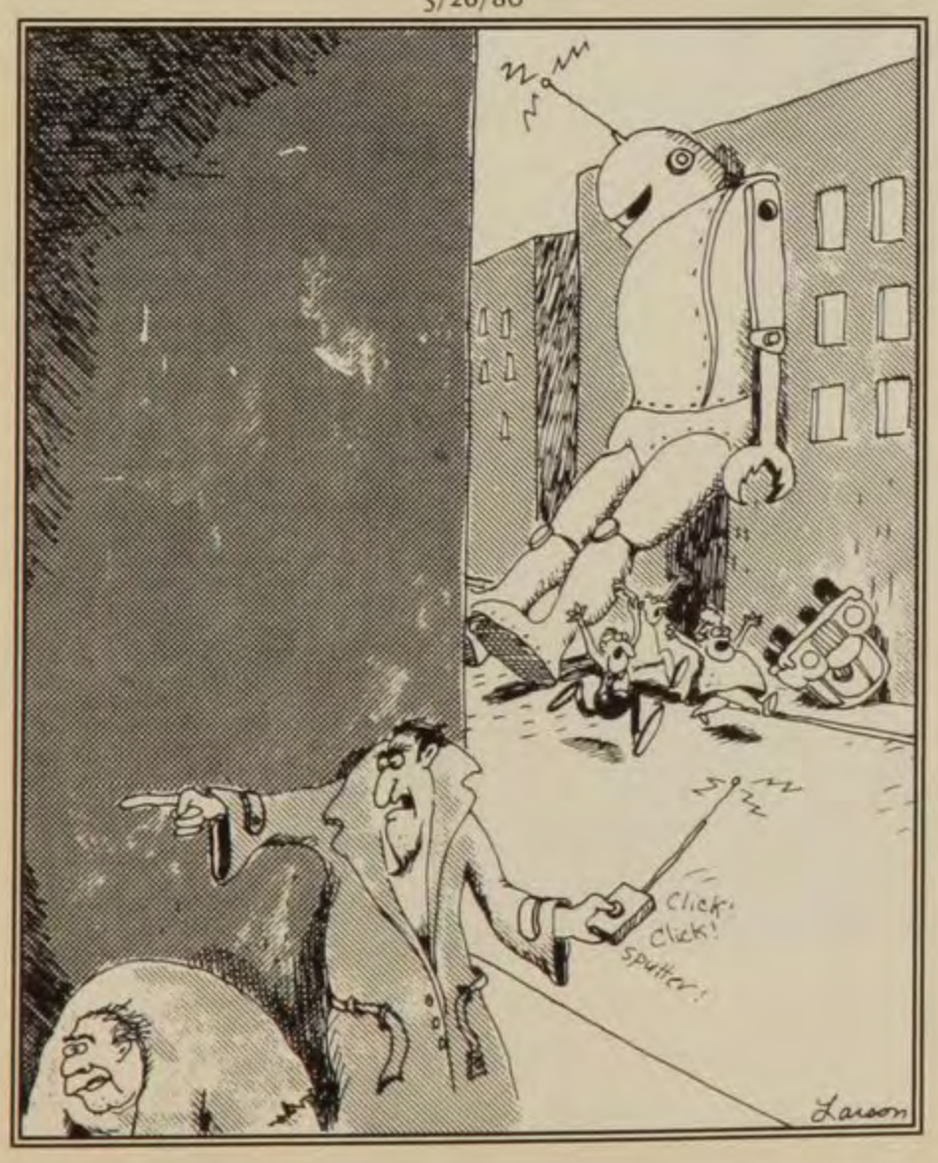
May 1980

5/23/80

"And remember—I don't want to catch you bothering the fish!"

5/24/80

5/26/80



"Curses! ... Quick, Igor! Run down to the store and get two size D flashlight batteries!"

5/27/80

"Yes, sir ... we caught him trying to smuggle this in under his coat."

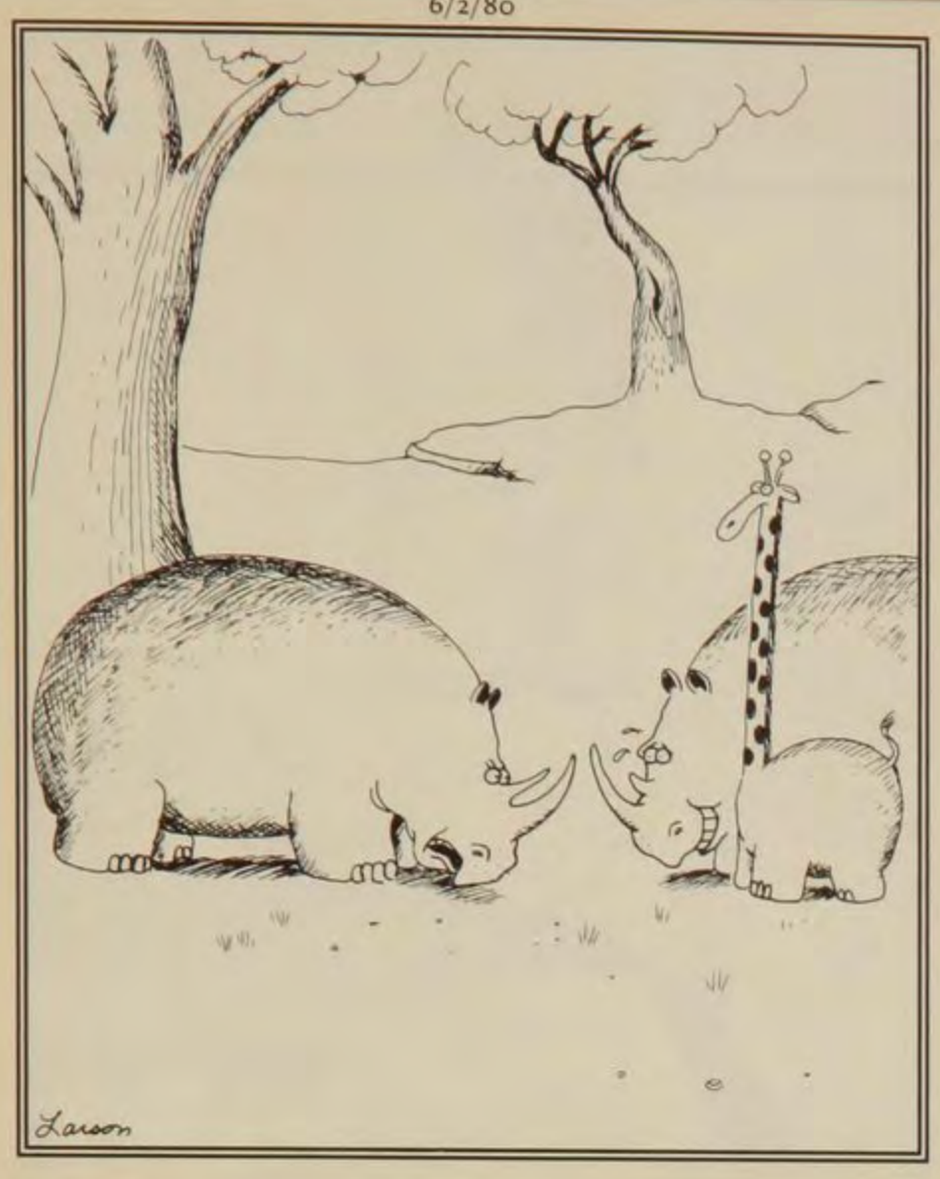
May 1980

"Okay, it's settled—tonight at midnight,
when the place is closed, we sail!"

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, I give you
the world's greatest escape artist ...
THE GREAT WALDO!"

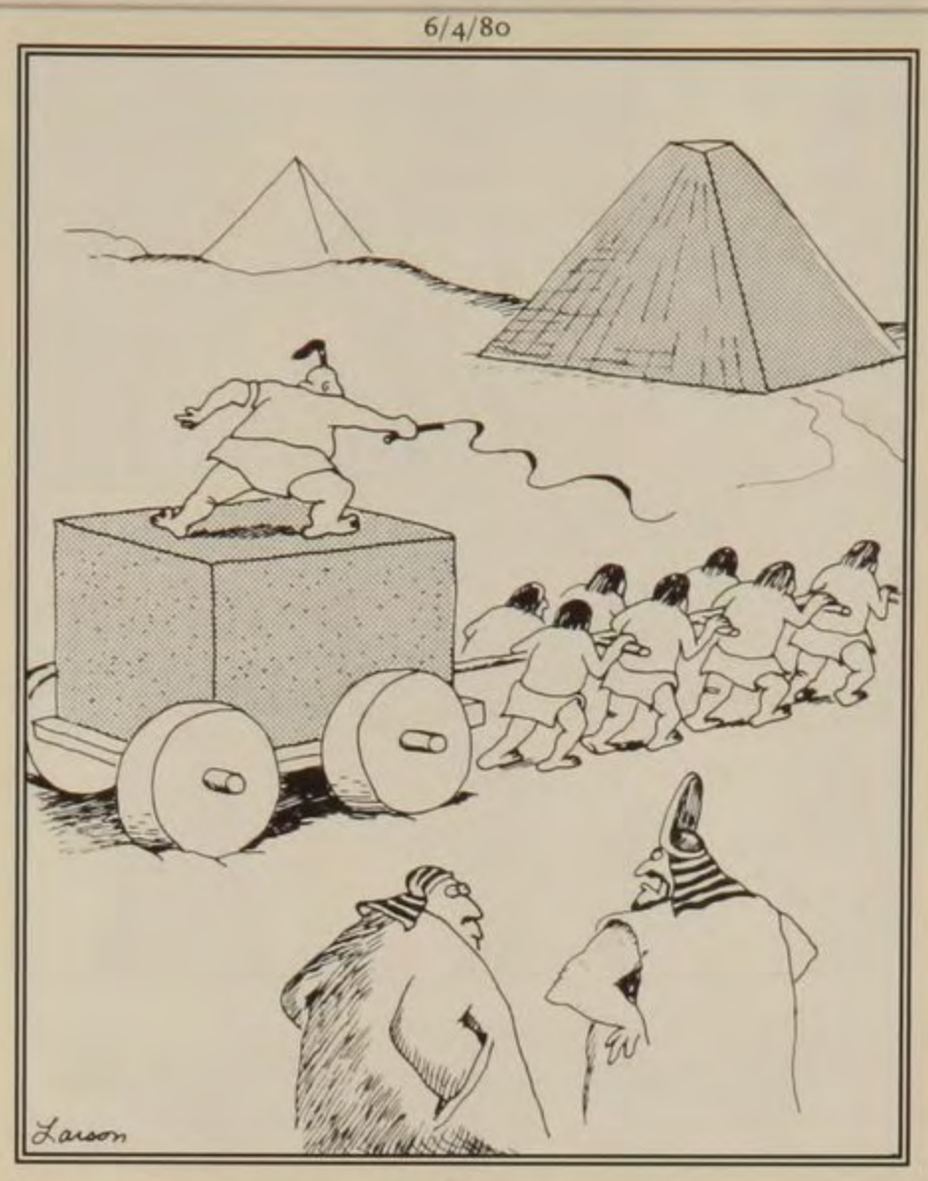
June 1980

6/2/80



"There's something different about that kid."

6/4/80



"Well, if it'll keep my razor blades sharp,
that's all I ask."

6/3/80

"There I was—asleep in this little cave here,
when suddenly I was attacked by this
hideous thing with five heads!"

6/5/80

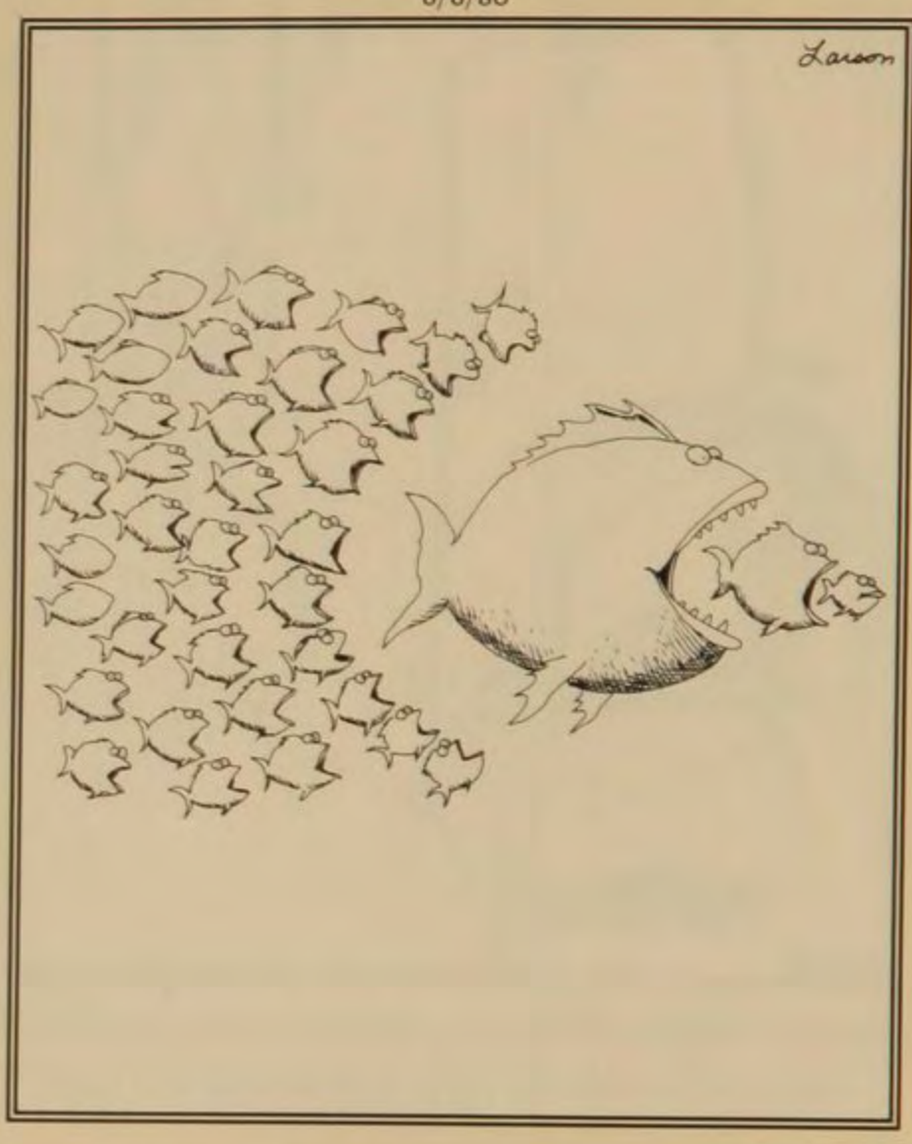
"Oh, Mrs. Oswald ... you've forgotten
something again."

June 1980

6/9/80

"'That's fine,' I said. 'Good nose,' I said.
But no, you had to go and hit the
chisel one more time."

6/6/80



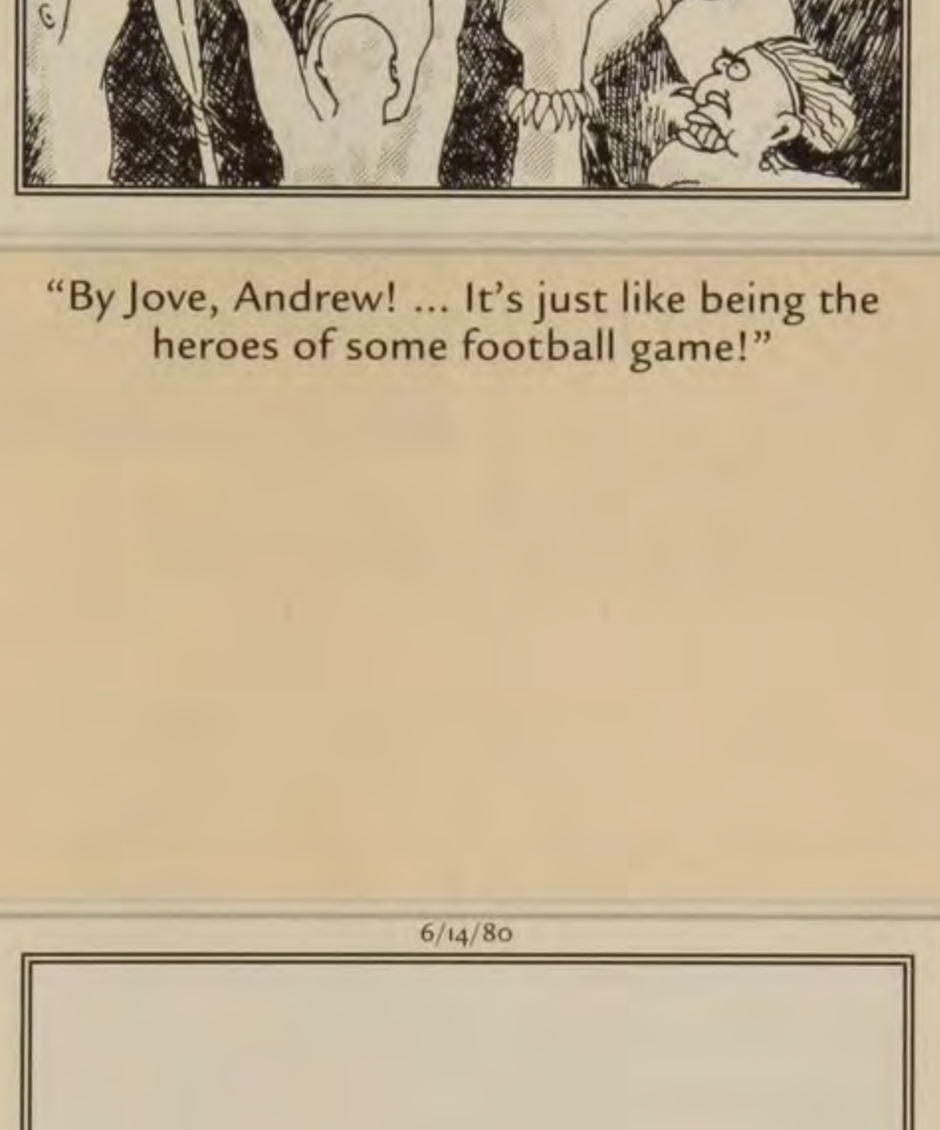
6/7/80

June 1980

"All units prepare to move in! ... He's givin' him the duck now!"

"By Jove, Andrew! ... It's just like being the heroes of some football game!"

"This town ain't big enough for both of us, Redeye."



June 1980

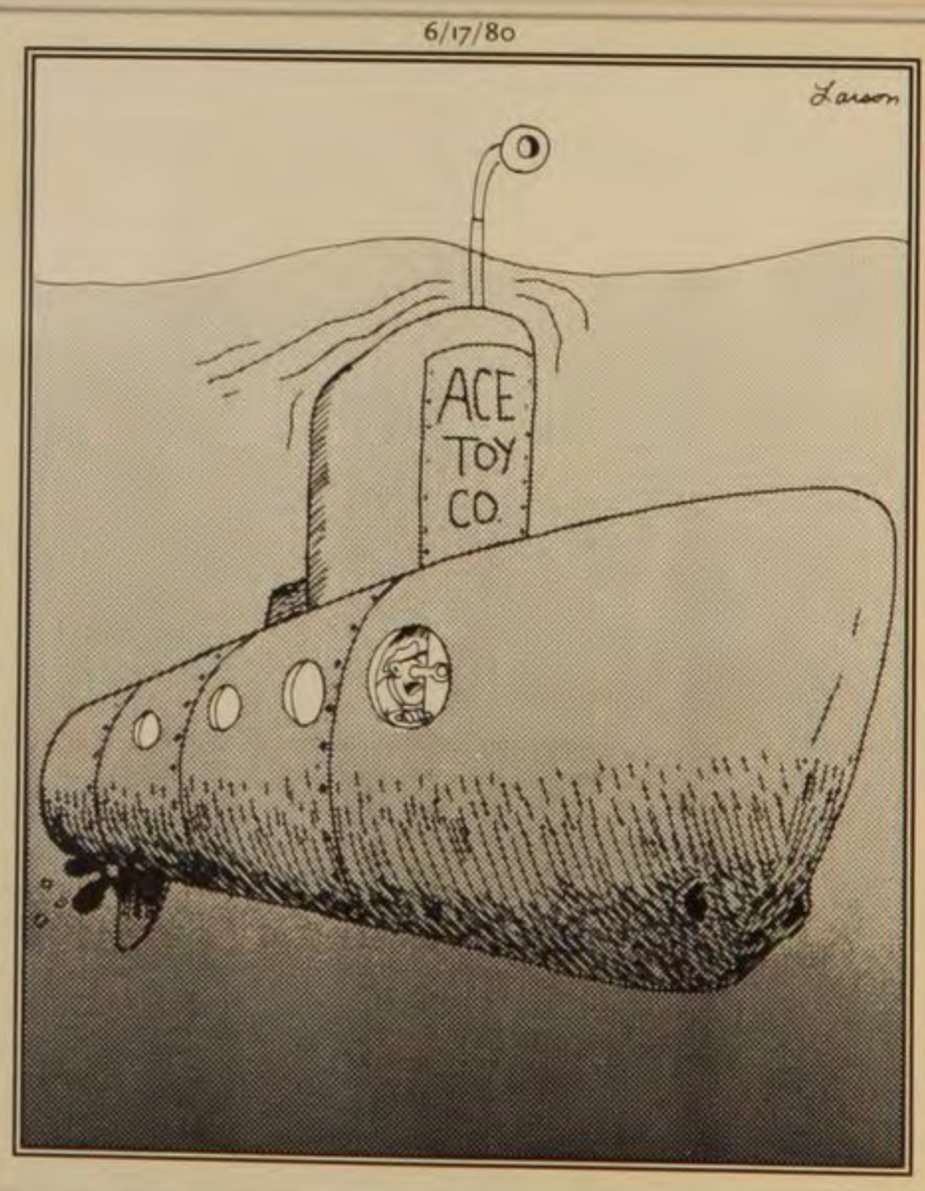
6/10/80

"And the last gladiator left alive will win the contest.
But first ... the egg-toss!"

6/16/80

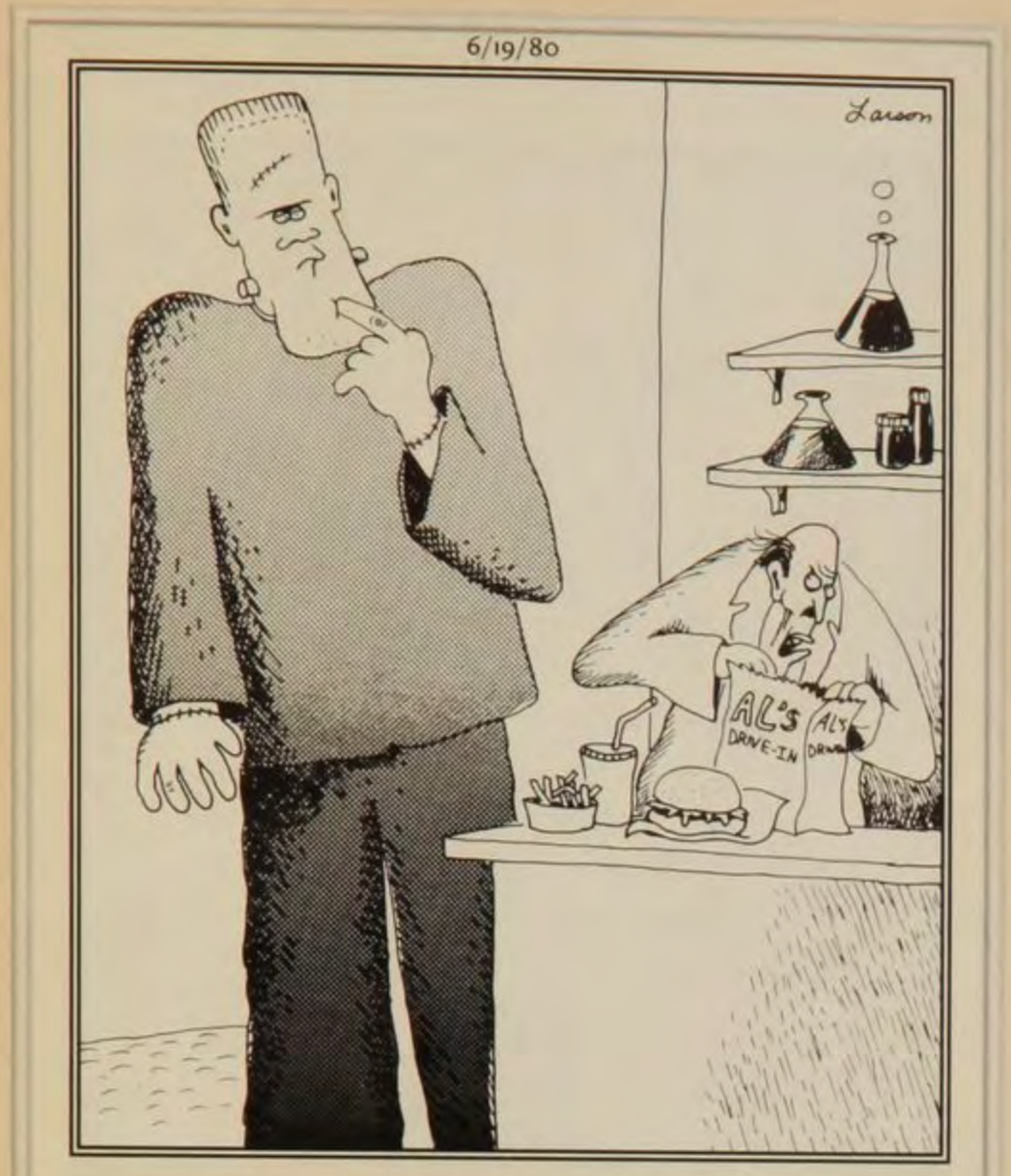
"It's no use. I drink and I drink, and I still can't forget."

6/17/80



"Get ready! He's put the rubber ducky down and now he's reaching for the bar of soap!"

June 1980



"What? No tartar sauce? ... You'd forget your own head if it wasn't bolted on!"

"So! You've been fighting again! ... And in your new suit, too!"

"Curse this New York City sewer system! ... It's backing up again."

June 1980

"Nice guy ... except for that zebra-breath."

"Thank God! ... It was only a cat!"

"Oh Thorg! The new bird feeder is *wonderful!*"

"Head five miles west until you come to a river, then fly upstream about a mile until you come to the sign 'Sunshine Nudist Camp.'"

June 1980

6/24/80

"You'll never get away with this!"

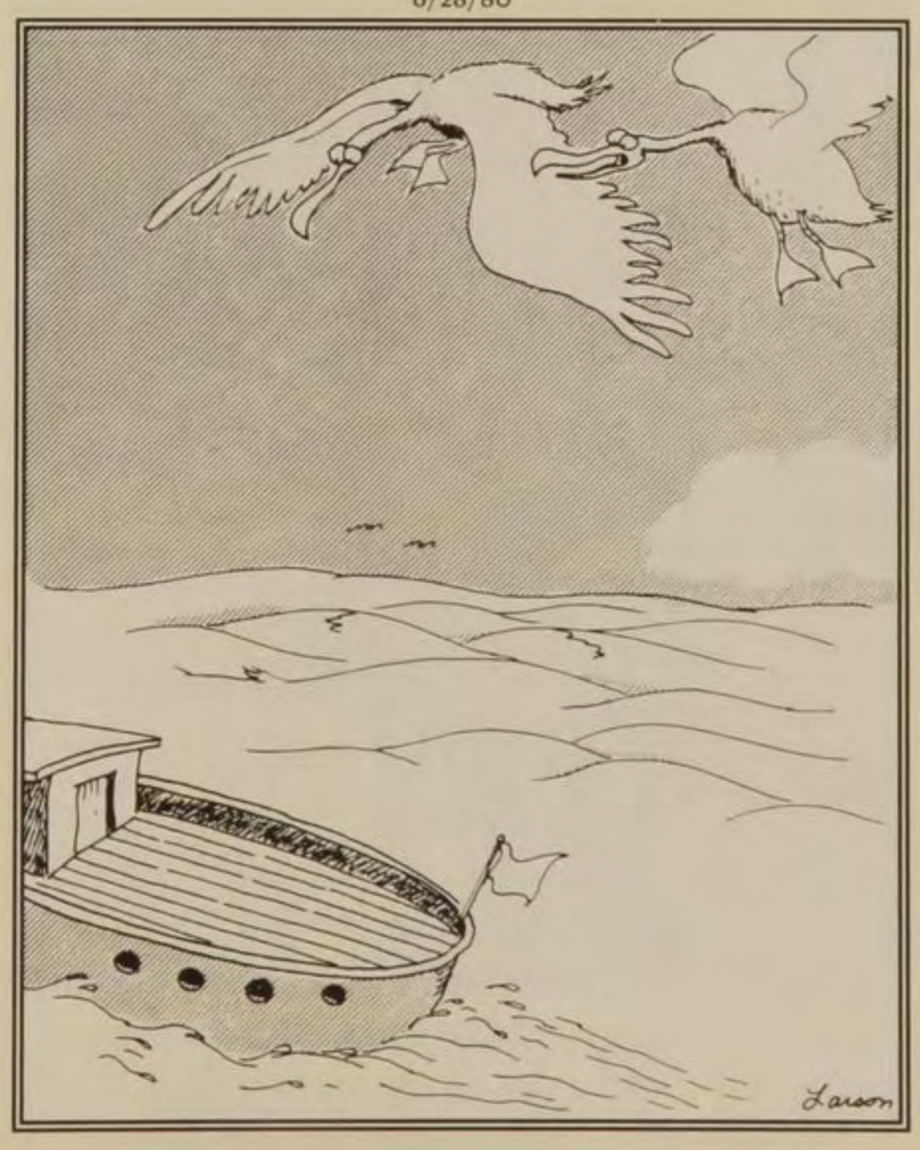
6/26/80

"Yeah, Sylvia—my set too. ... And in the middle of *Laverne and Shirley*."

6/30/80

"REMEMBER THE ... uh ... REMEMBER THE ... REMEMBER THAT PLACE IN TEXAS!"

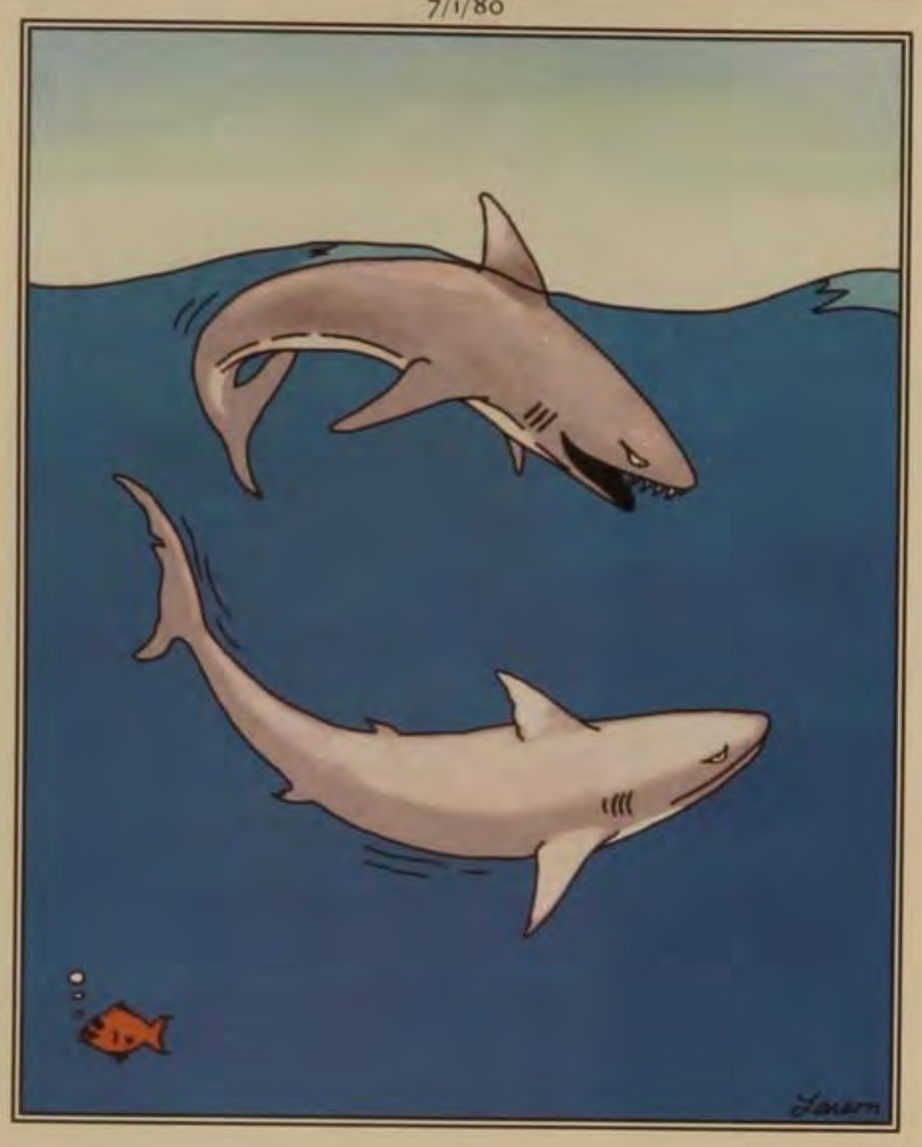
6/28/80



"The curse of every albatross—that ship's been following us for days!"

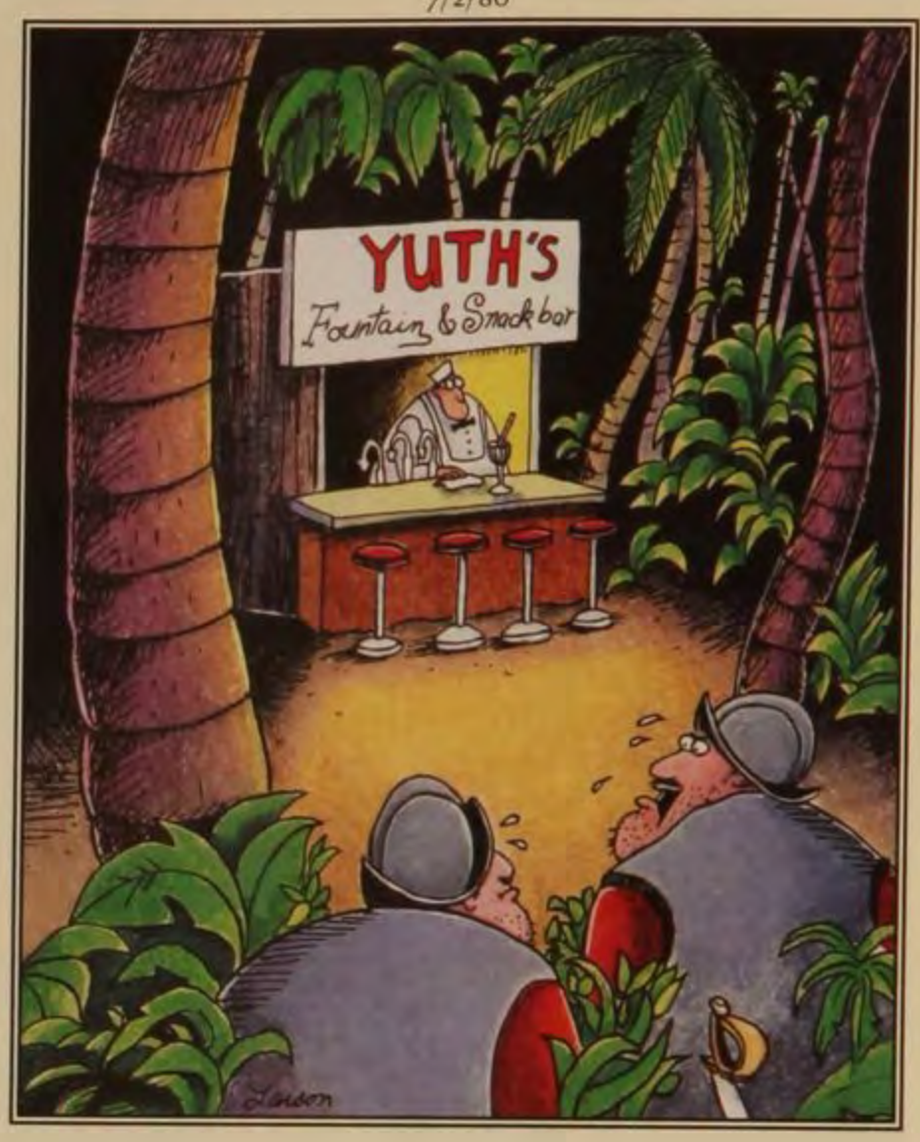
July 1980

7/1/80



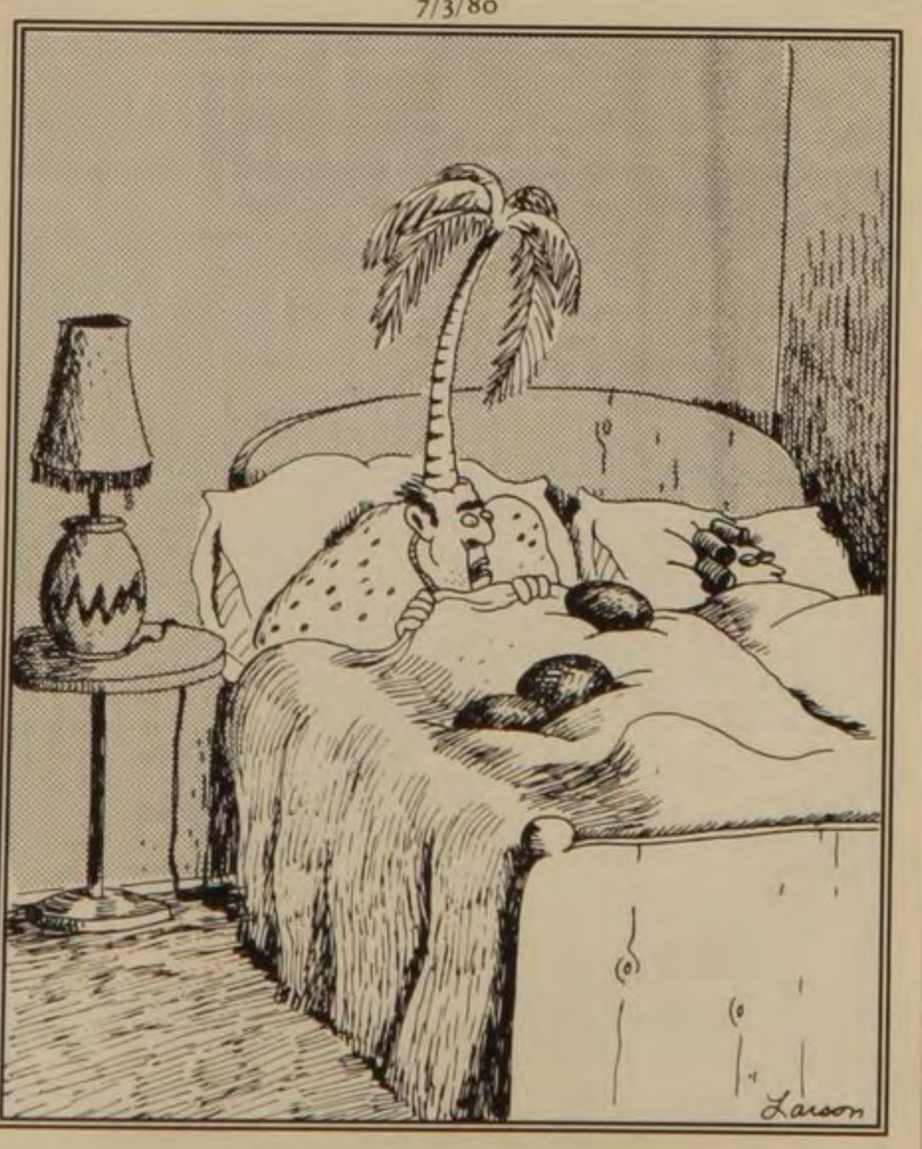
"Say, honey ... didn't I meet you last night at the feeding frenzy?"

7/2/80



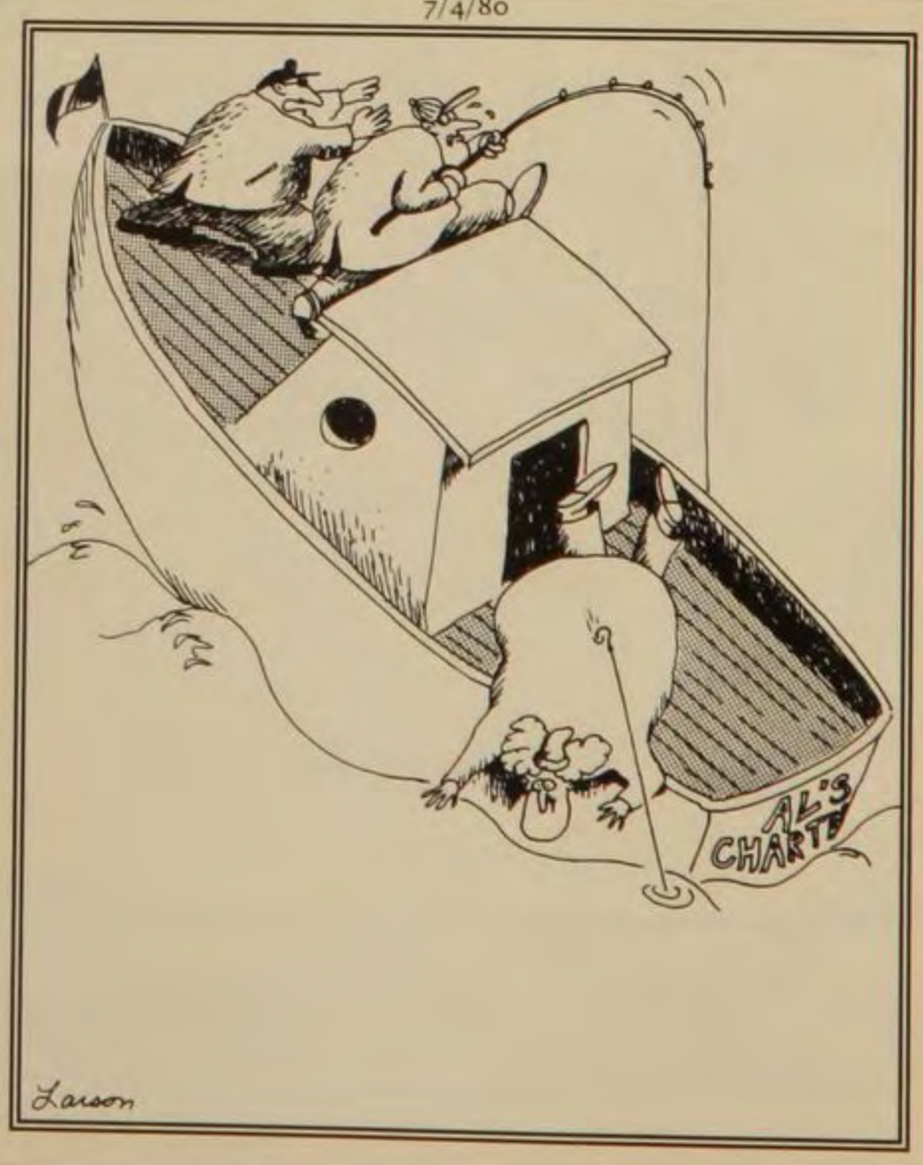
"When we get back, I'm gonna wring de León's neck!"

7/3/80



"What the? ... Margaret! Margaret! Wake up! ... The bed's covered with coconuts!"

7/4/80



"Set the hook! Set the hook!"

July 1980

7/8/80

Larson

"And that goes for Lancelot, Galahad, and the rest of you guys—no more stickin' your gum under the table."

7/5/80

Larson

"Aha!"

7/7/80

Larson

"Gad, that's eerie. ... No matter where you stand the nose seems to follow."

7/9/80

"Just look at those stars tonight. ... Makes you feel sort of small and insignificant."

July 1980

"And while you're out there, bring in a couple of them frozen dinners."

"It's the attendant ... he's been trampled."

"So then this little sailor dude whips out this can of spinach, this crazy music starts playin', and ... well, just *look* at this place."

"Now here's one of the mysteries of the universe. ... Which came first?"

July 1980

7/17/80

"I'm sorry, we did call an exterminator ...
but we've changed our minds."

7/19/80

7/16/80

"Well, I guess that does it, folks. ... Number 26
is taking his ball and going home."

July 1980

7/12/80

"Look! Down there! ... It's a worm!"

7/18/80

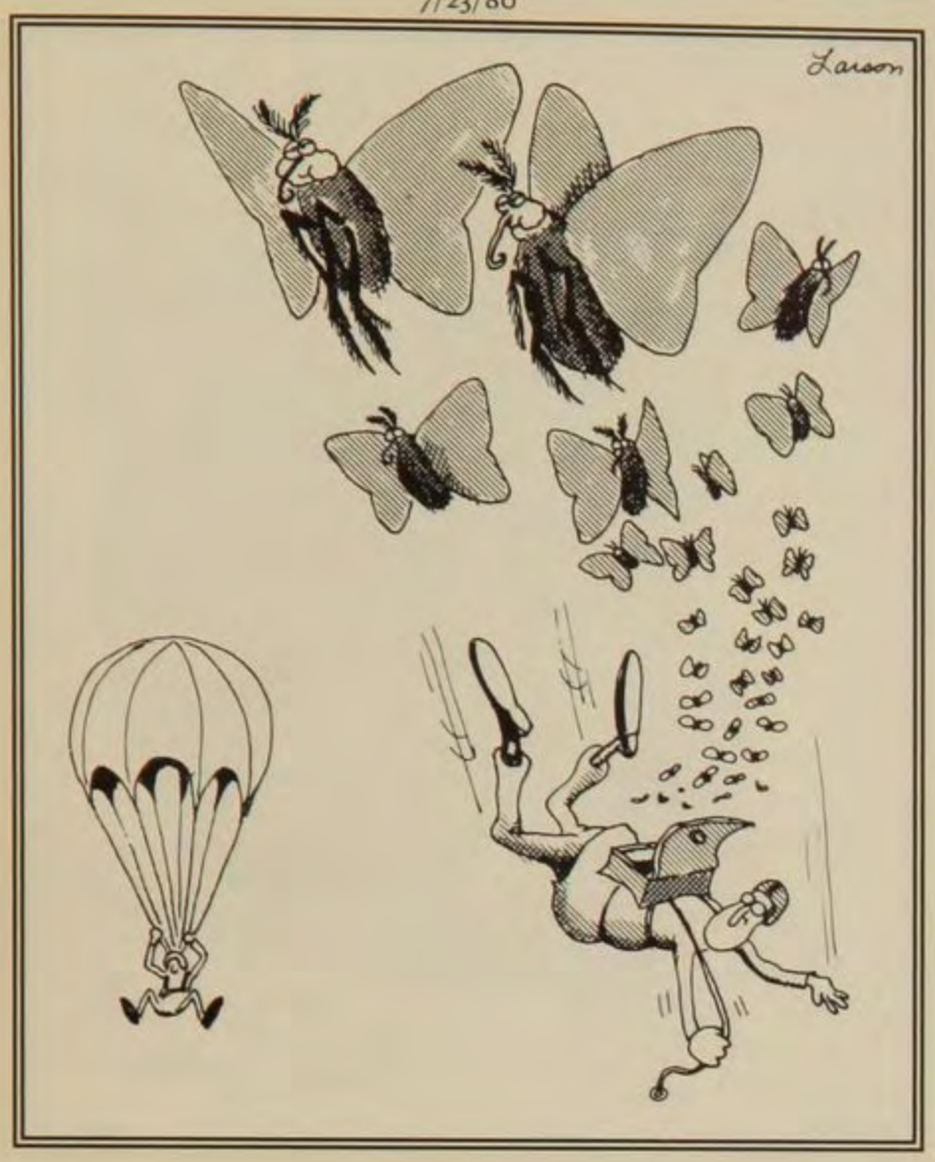
7/21/80

"Two, four, six, eight, who do we appreciate ..."

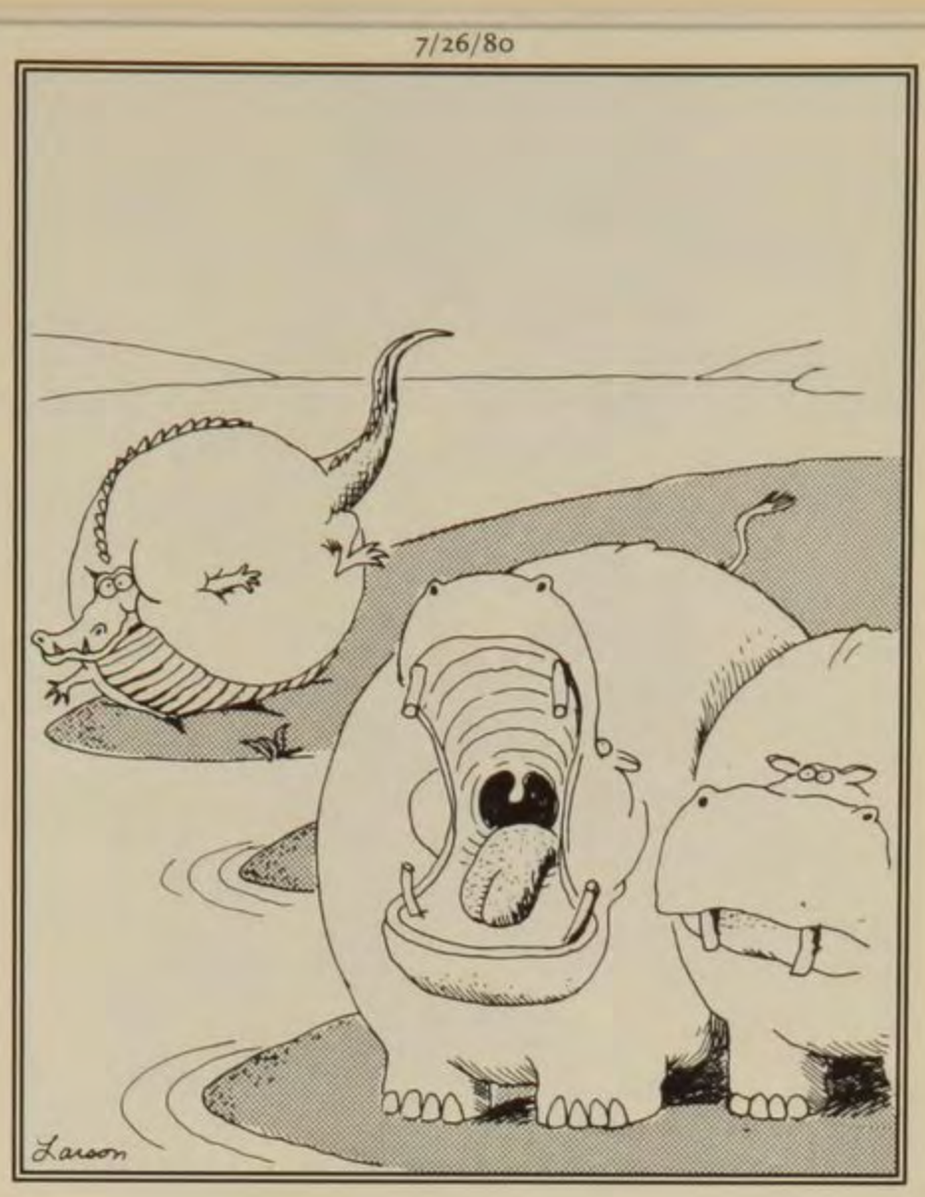
7/22/80

July 1980

7/23/80



7/26/80



"AAAAAAAAAAlbert!"

7/24/80

"And now *we're* going to play she-loves-me, she-loves-me-not!"

7/25/80

July 1980

7/28/80

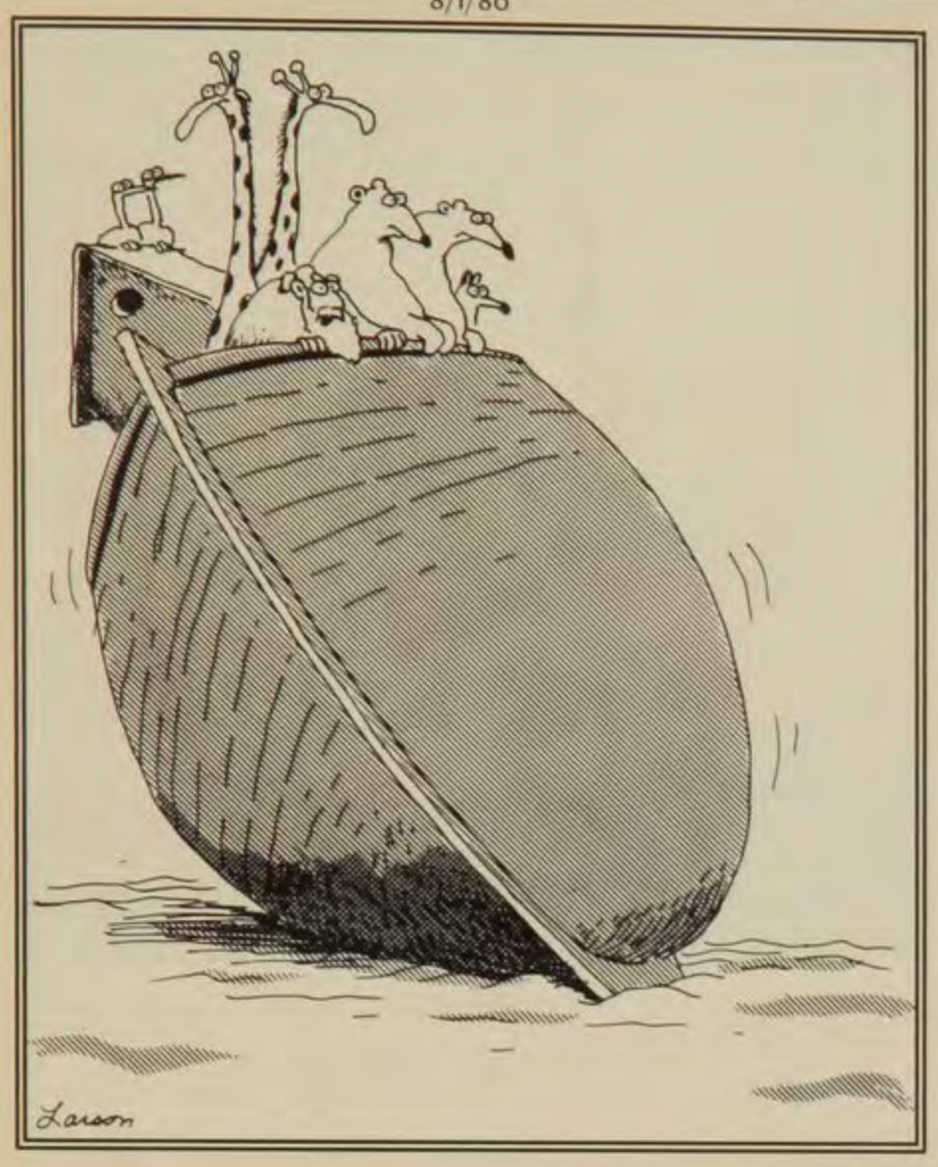
7/29/80

7/30/80

7/31/80

August 1980

8/1/80



"Blast! ... The elephants are sick again!"

8/2/80

8/5/80

8/7/80

August 1980

8/4/80

8/6/80

"I like it ... I like it."

8/8/80

8/9/80

August 1980

Editor's note: This is a memo from Stuart Dodds to his boss, Stan Arnold, general manager of Chronicle Features Syndicate. Dodds, the sales manager for the syndicate, had the unenviable job of being the first person to try and sell The Far Side *to newspaper editors (who tend to be a rather cynical lot). It was written late at night in a small motel room in the desert outside of Tucson on his portable typewriter.*

Dear Stan:

I wonder if we might gather some of the reactions I have had to Gary Larson--editors' comments--and weave them into a story of some kind for R&P (or even a note for general circulation--or both). The initial response to this cartoon has been quite funny and un-editor-like, if you think as I often do of newspaper editors as cautious and diplomatic people--judicious in their praise, given rarely to hyperbole or boundless laughter at the slightest occasion--above all, as having an immunity to outrage (a languor in the face of eccentricity) that borders on world-weariness!...And then, all of a sudden, with Gary Larson on their desk, what human sparks emerge! What has made this interesting to me is not knowing as I travel from one place to the next what <u>kind</u> of response to expect--the reactions are so diverse, unpredictable--even from editors I know fairly well. I don't know if I am going to be offered another cup of Sanka or shown the door. There is a lot of outright laughter incidentally a lot of silence too with intermittent nervous laughter--and then there is some deep groaning, a miserable sound to hear. Anyway, here are some of the comments:

"I hate it, it's sick."

"Oh dear, OH DEAR!"

"The best thing since Doonesbury as far as I am concerned. And they're <u>all</u> good!"

2--Larson

"What a mind this man has. He's brilliant!"

"He's insane."

"Jesus...Jesus Christ."

"It might go over in San Francisco..."

"This is <u>not</u> a Buffalo product" (Buffalo Evening News)

"I don't know what this is but it's not for us."

"This is an excellent feature you have."

"This is the strangest thing I have seen in my life."

"Funny as hell."

"We'd get too much flack. I'd like to watch it for a while."

"Who is this guy?"

(There could follow a humorous biography of Larson.)

Editors by their nature are drawn towards controversy. If we can cast it about that this <u>is</u> a controversial feature, that it has brought on the highest praise from some quarters and made others hair stand on end, we'd build up curiosity--the inquiries would flow in and a percentage of them would buy it. Maybe we could send parts of this memo to R&P as "Notes From the Field" or some such thing, with one or two of the more horrifying cartoons... Those are my fevered thoughts in the desert tonight...

8/2/80--Tucson

August 1980

"No, no, Wendell ... you can't get blood out of a turnip."

"Look. I just don't feel the relationship is working out."

"So ... you wanna sell our pencils, do you?"

"It's quite strange ... almost like I'm being followed."

August 1980

8/15/80

8/16/80

8/18/80

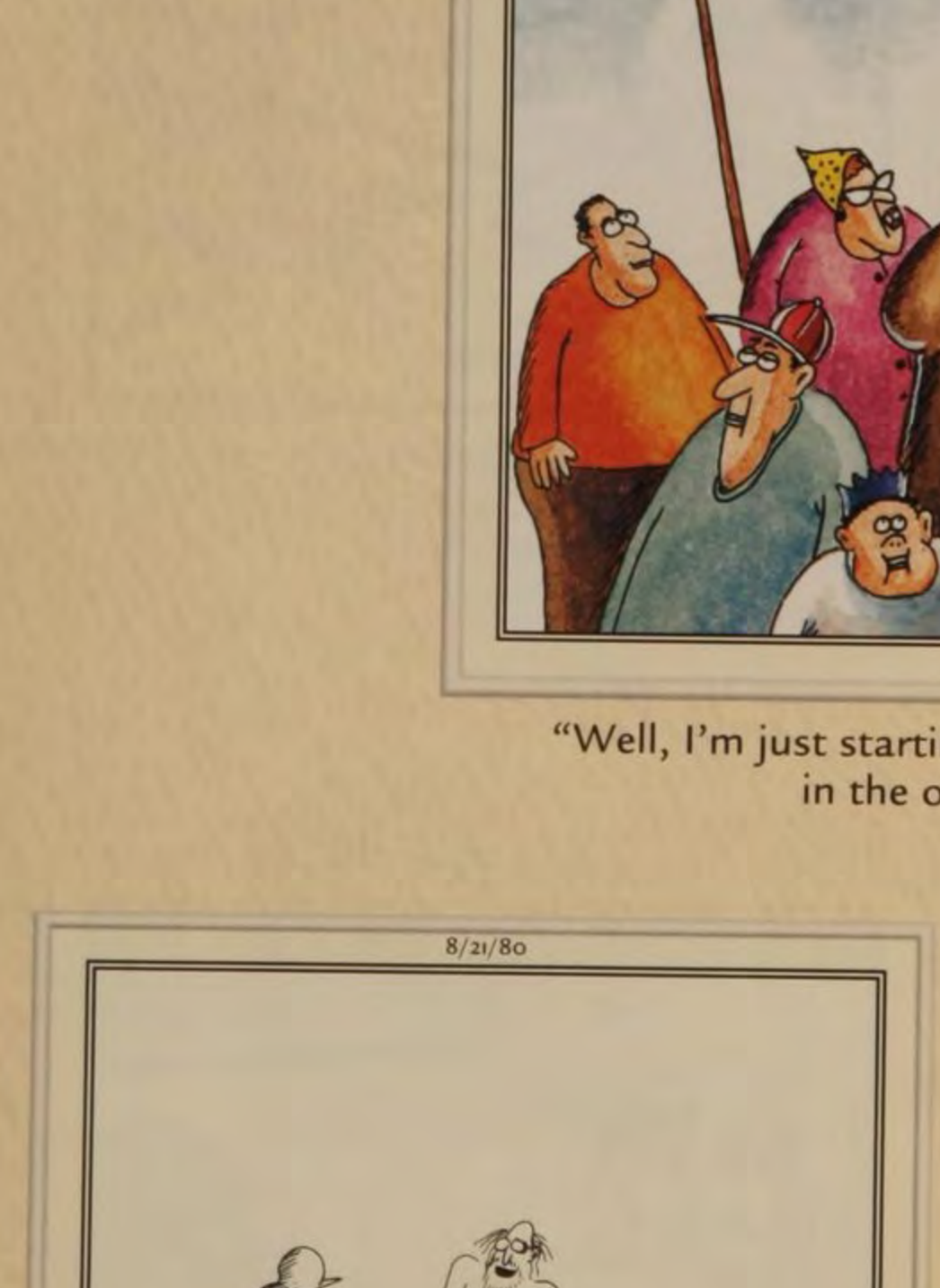
"This time, Johnson, just pull the pin, throw the grenade, and refrain from yelling 'Heads!'"

8/20/80

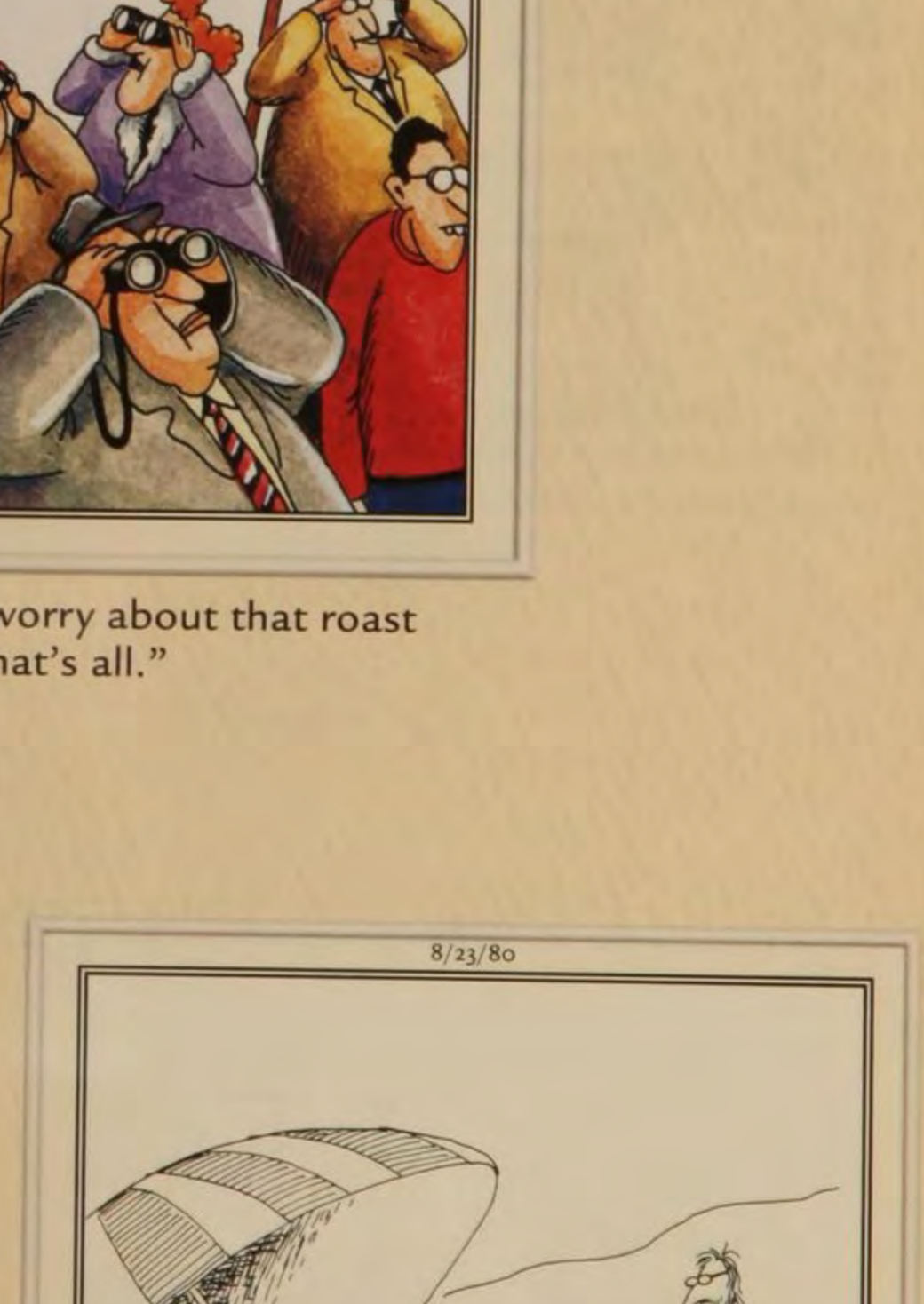
"Gad! Clear the dance floor—here come the Nelsons again."

August 1980

"Well, I'm just starting to worry about that roast in the oven, that's all."



"Oh, sure—*white* whales. ... We've got plenty of *them*."

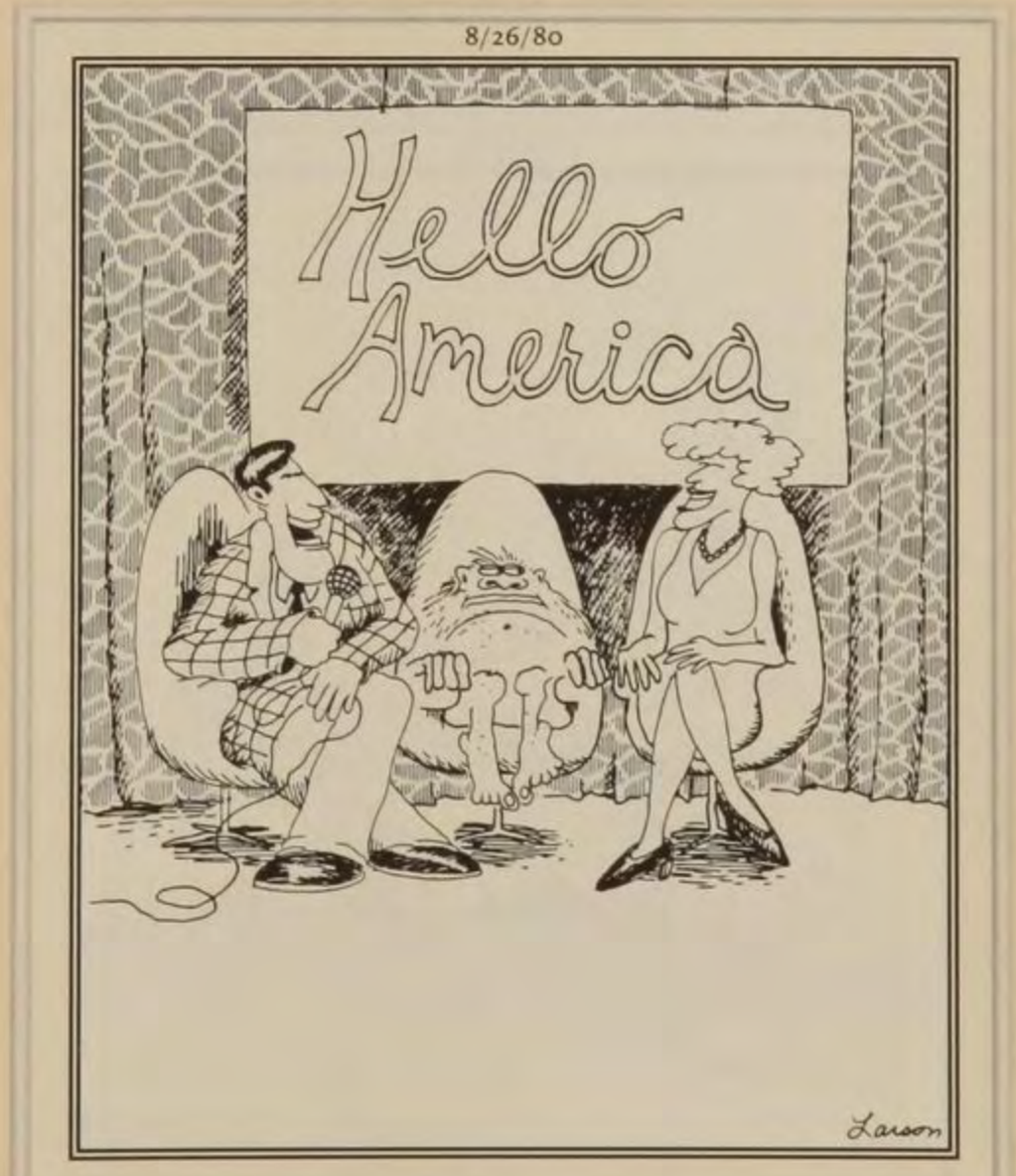


"Excuse me, but I believe that's my Frisbee."

August 1980

"I'm sorry, Mr. Funucci, but we've decided to award the ceiling project to Michelangelo."

"Quick, powerful, and totally unpredictable—that's our Bobo."



"And so, after being frozen in ice for almost 50,000 years, we'll ask our friend here what dramatic changes he's noticed."

August 1980

8/27/80

"I'm afraid you'll have to do better than that, sir. ... The former president could spin twenty-six times before stopping."

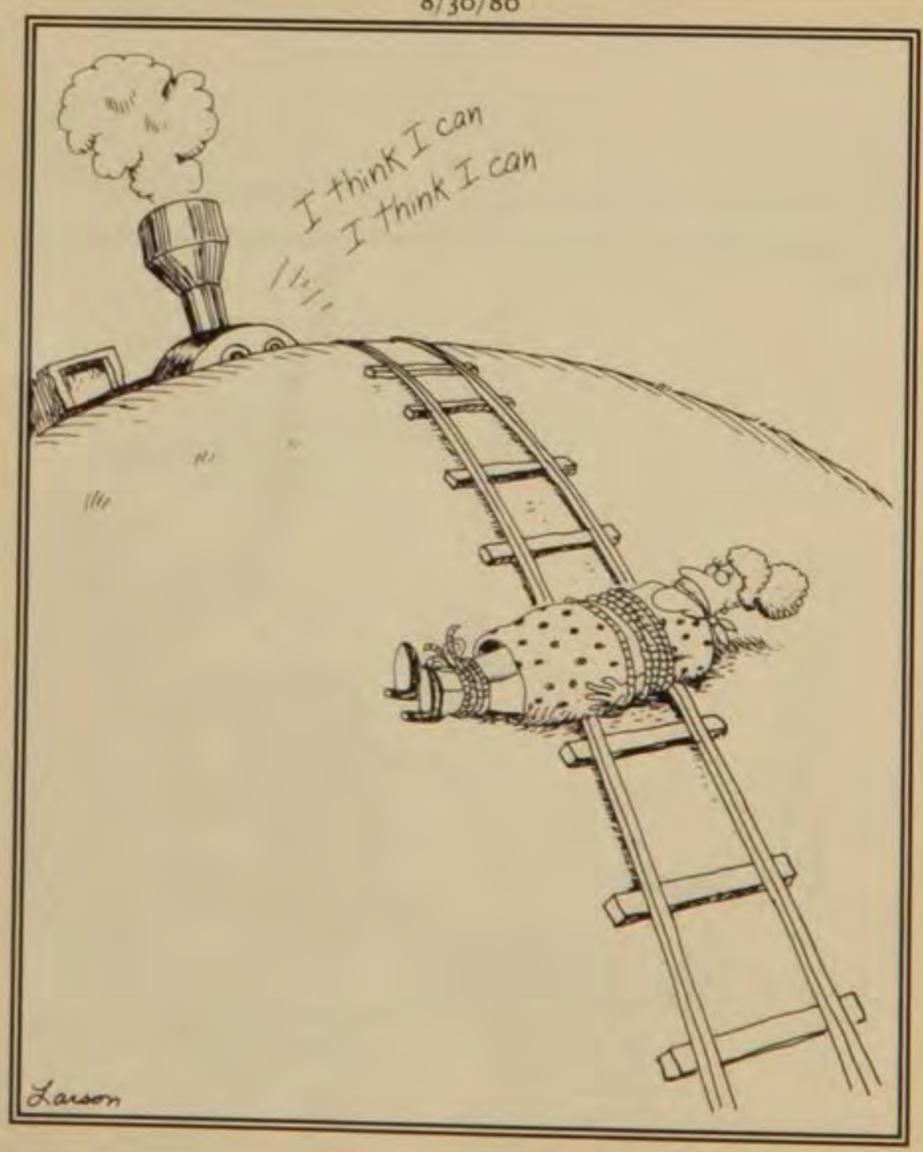
8/28/80

"I've done it! The first real evidence of a UFO! ... And with my own camera, in my own darkroom, and in my own ..."

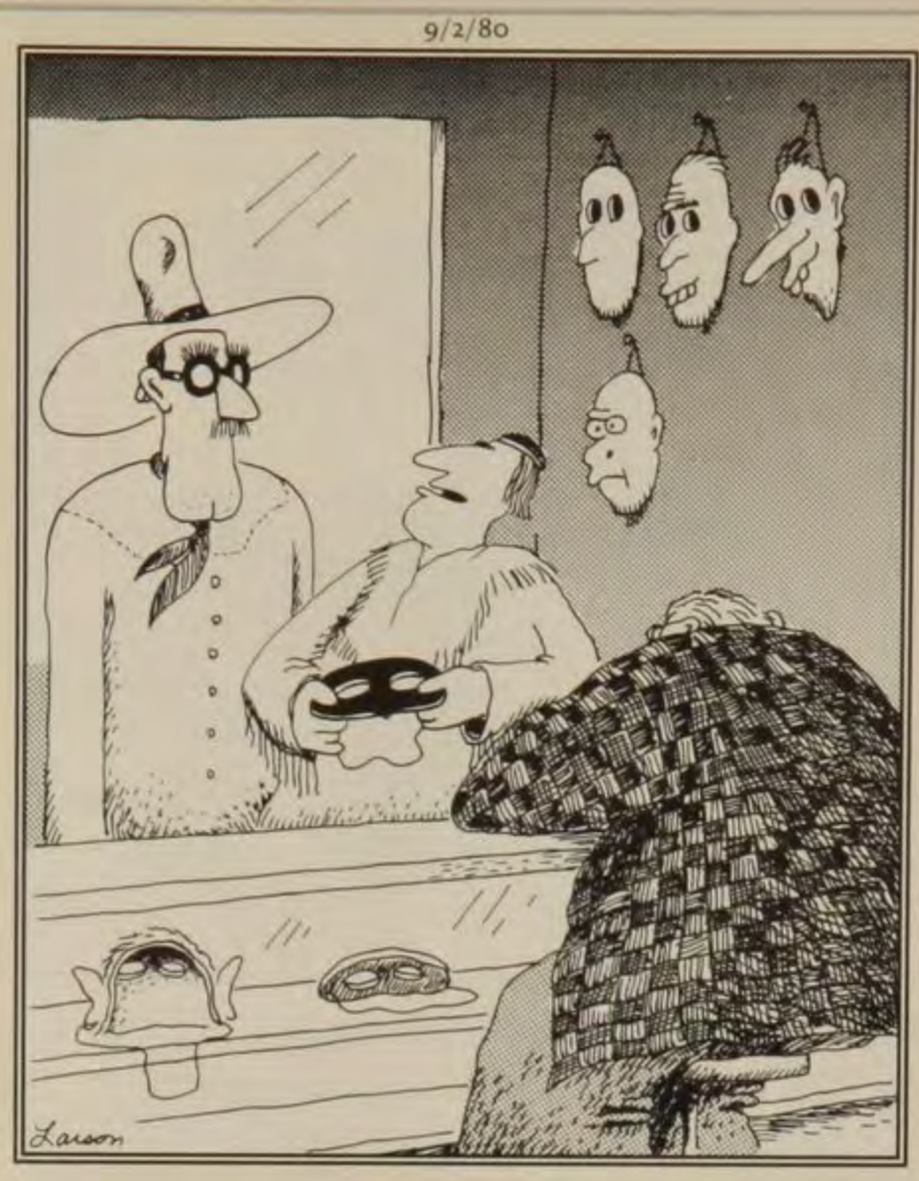
8/29/80

"Gesundheit!"

8/30/80



September 1980



"Hmmm ... not bad, Kemosabe ... but this one little better maybe."

"Okay, okay, settle down! ... Now who wants dark meat and who wants white?"

"Gad ... I gotta get this thing in for a tune-up."

September 1980

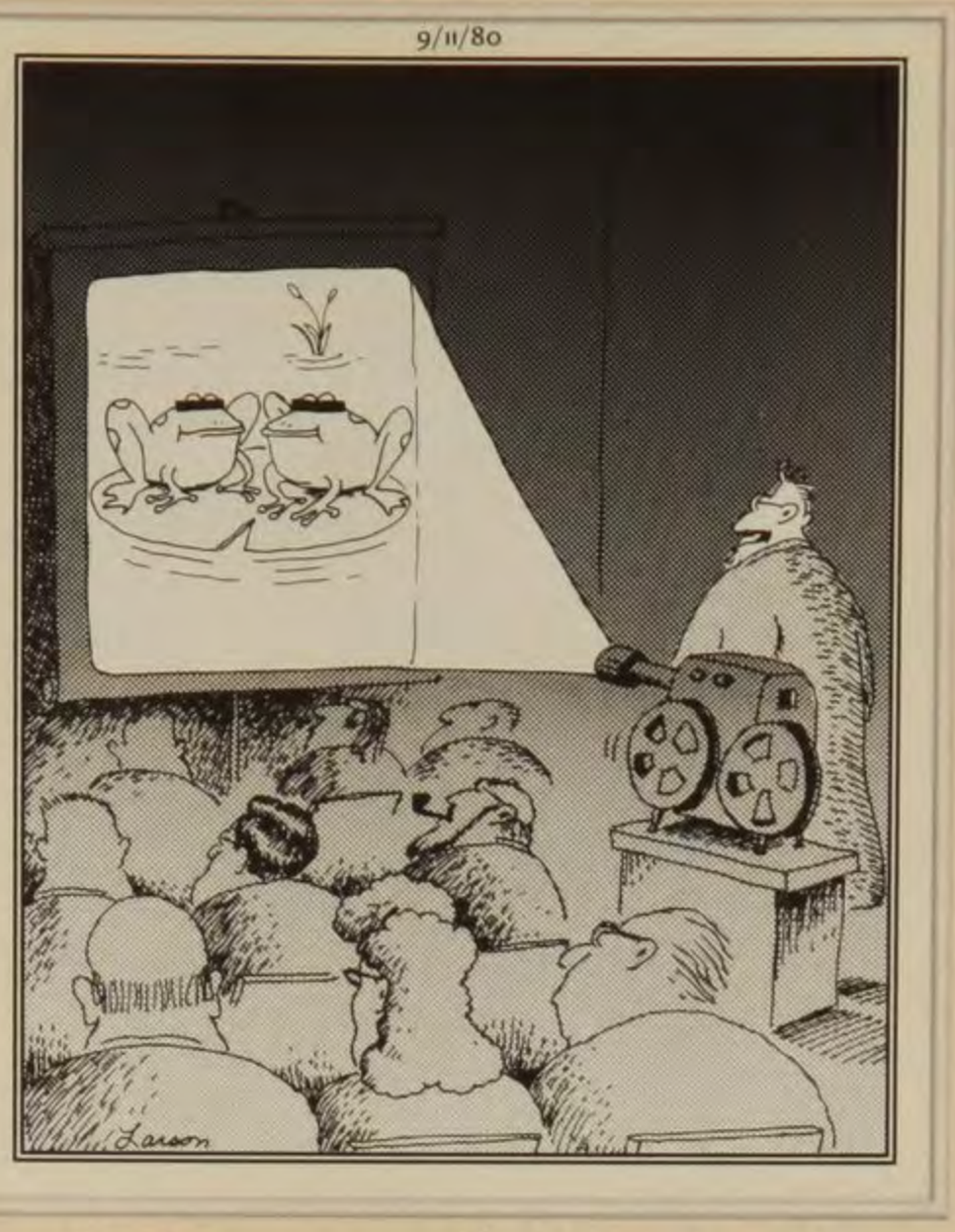
"God, Harriet ... check out
the run in his nylon."

"Hey, Oona! Did you order
some of this stuff?"

"Andrew, go out and get your grandfather. ...
The squirrels have got him again."

September 1980

"For twelve perfect years I was a car-chaser. Pontiacs, Fords, Chryslers—I took 'em all on ... and yesterday my stupid owner backs over me in the driveway."



"And now, as you will observe, the male *Bufo boreas* begins his courtship display as the female responds to the vocal stimulus."

"Looks like some drifter comin' into town."

"You moron! ... I told you it was only a mirage!"

September 1980

9/16/80

"Pie trap! ... We're in Zubutu country, all right."

9/17/80

9/15/80

"Nice try."

9/20/80

"Well, there goes the neighborhood."

September 1980

9/18/80

"Mother was right! ... I never should have married outside my own species!"

9/19/80

"Yoo-hoo! Oh, yoo-hoo! ... I think I'm getting a blister."

9/23/80

"I can't take this curse any longer! ... Every sunrise I change into this hairless, frail little man who couldn't hurt a fly."

9/24/80

"Zag and Thena! ... Come on in and act uncivilized!"

September 1980

"I guess he made it. ... It's been more than a week since he went over the wall."

"Hey, Zoran! What's happenin'? ... Give me six!"

"We're in luck. I don't think he sees it."

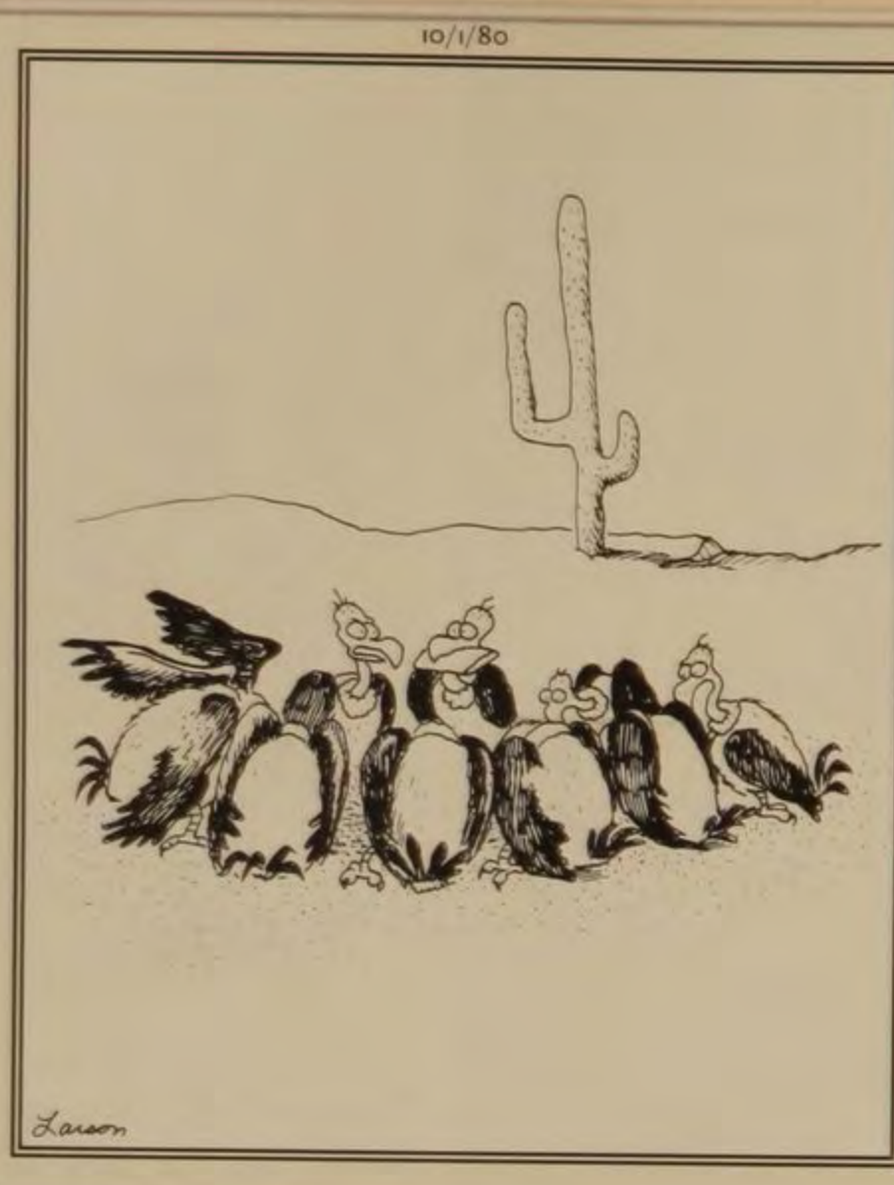
September 1980

"Hey! Here's one! ... 'Mad scientist needs assistant.'"

"Oh hey! I just love these things! ... Crunchy on the outside and a chewy center!"

October 1980

10/1/80

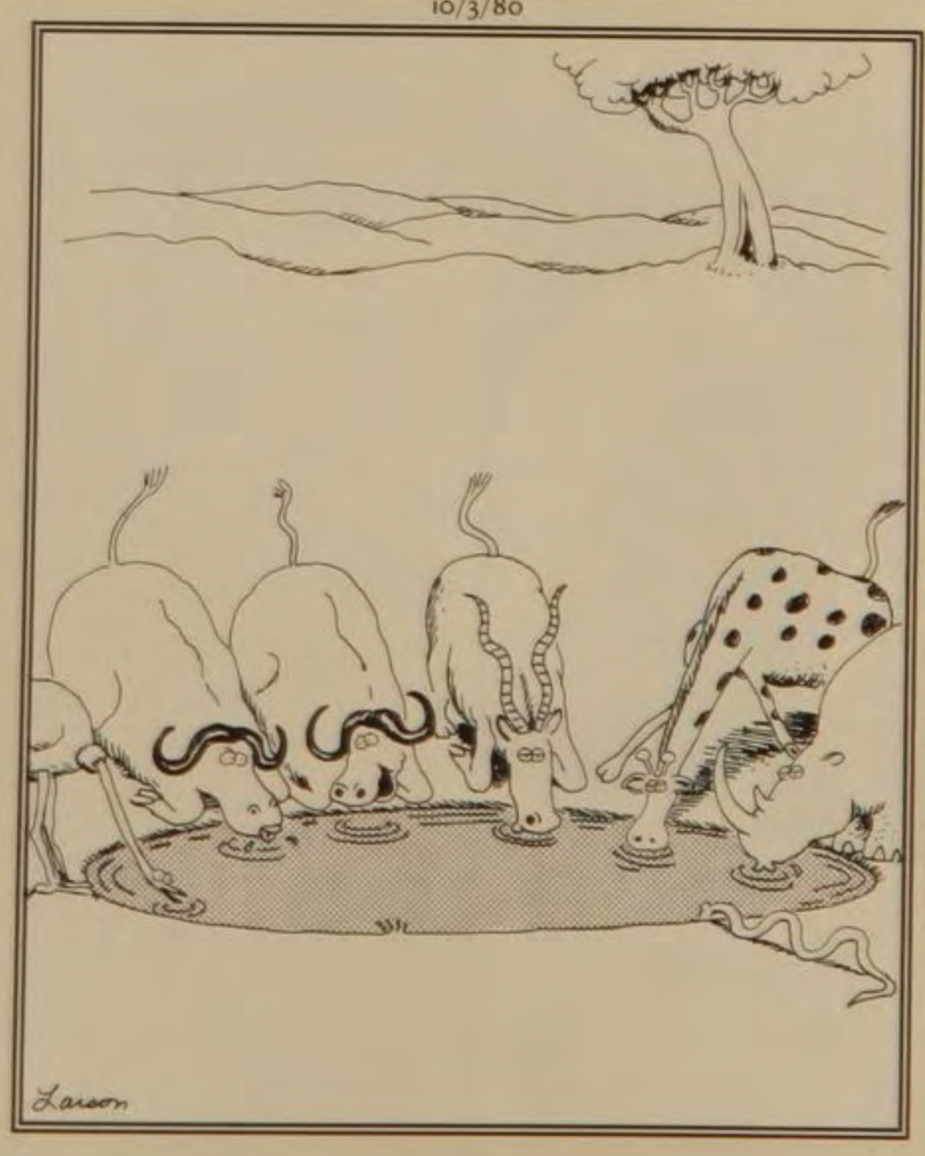


"You fool! You can't eat that ... it's a wallet!"

10/2/80

"You're embarrassing me, Warren."

10/3/80



"So ... come here often?"

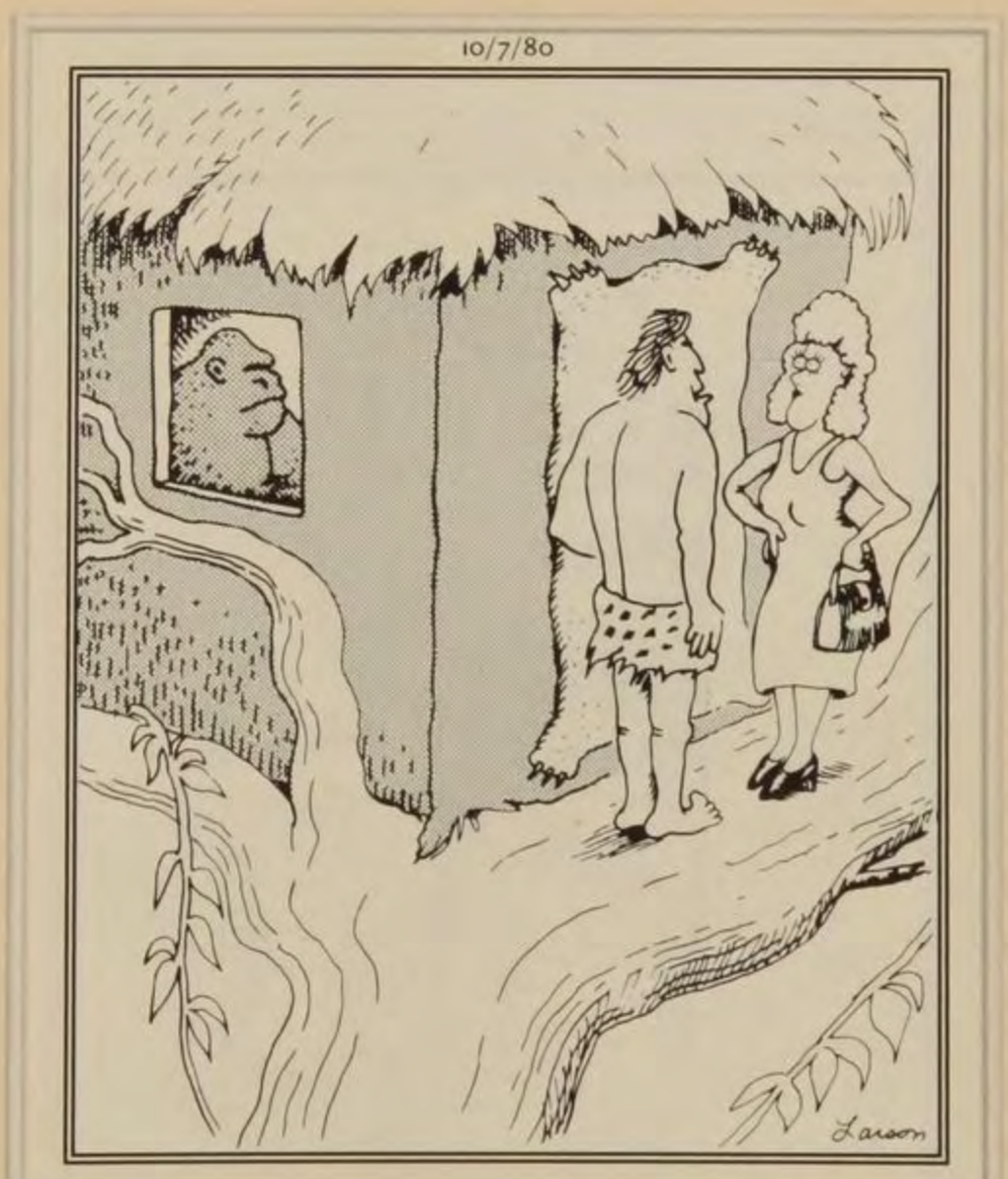
10/4/80

"Listen. I think we better keep this quiet."

October 1980

"The contact points must be dirty. ... Just click it up and down a few times."

"Well, Mr. President, let's see—carry the one, take away three, carry the two ... that would be four score and seven years ago."



"My folks are a little different ... just ignore them if they start looking through your hair for fleas and things."

October 1980

"We better eat it ... or we'll get that old lecture again about the birds starving in Asia."

"Well, my gosh, Mr. Turner ... I remember you selling these things thirty years ago!"

"And in addition, Mrs. Khan, little Genghis disrupts the class, fights with other children, and completely lacks any leadership ability."

October 1980

10/17/80

"Young man, if you've got a pet in there ..."

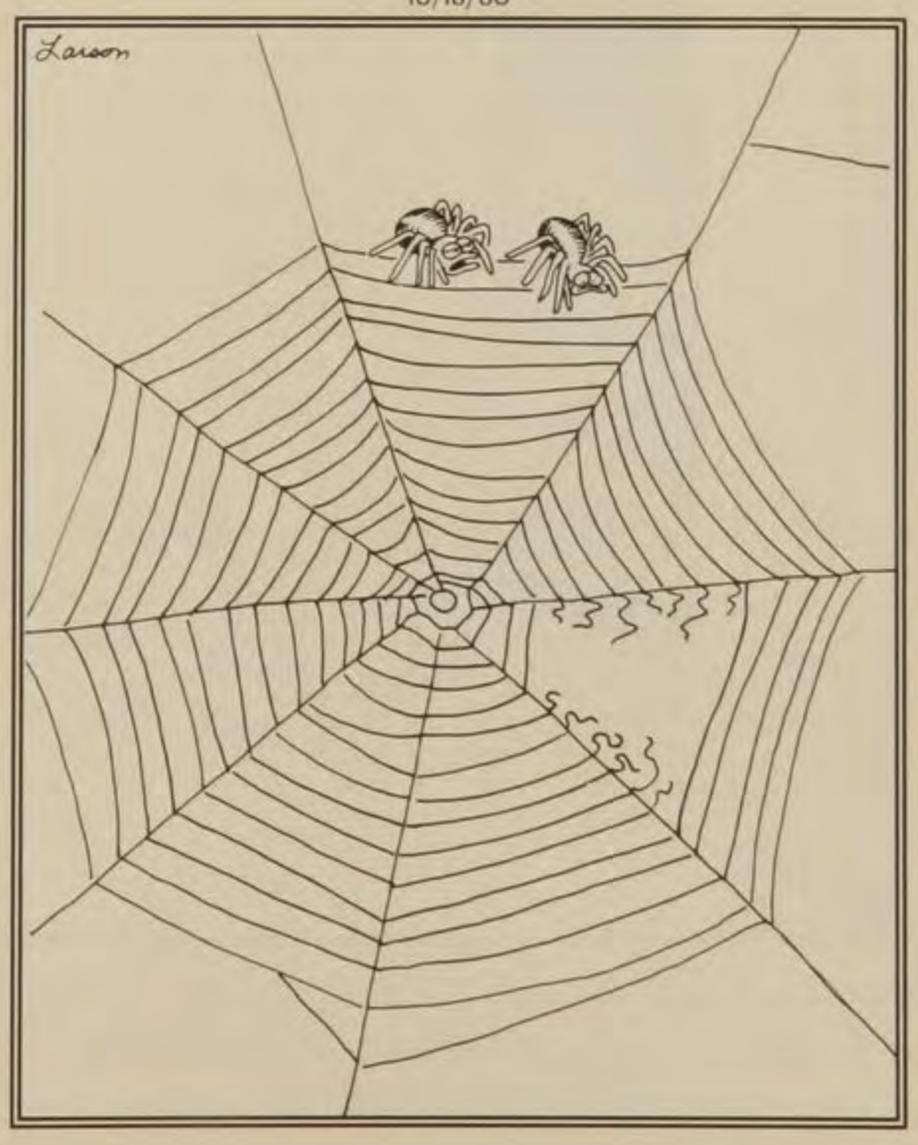
10/14/80

"Now over here, Mom and Dad, is what we call 'The Rack,' and I'll show you how it works."

10/16/80

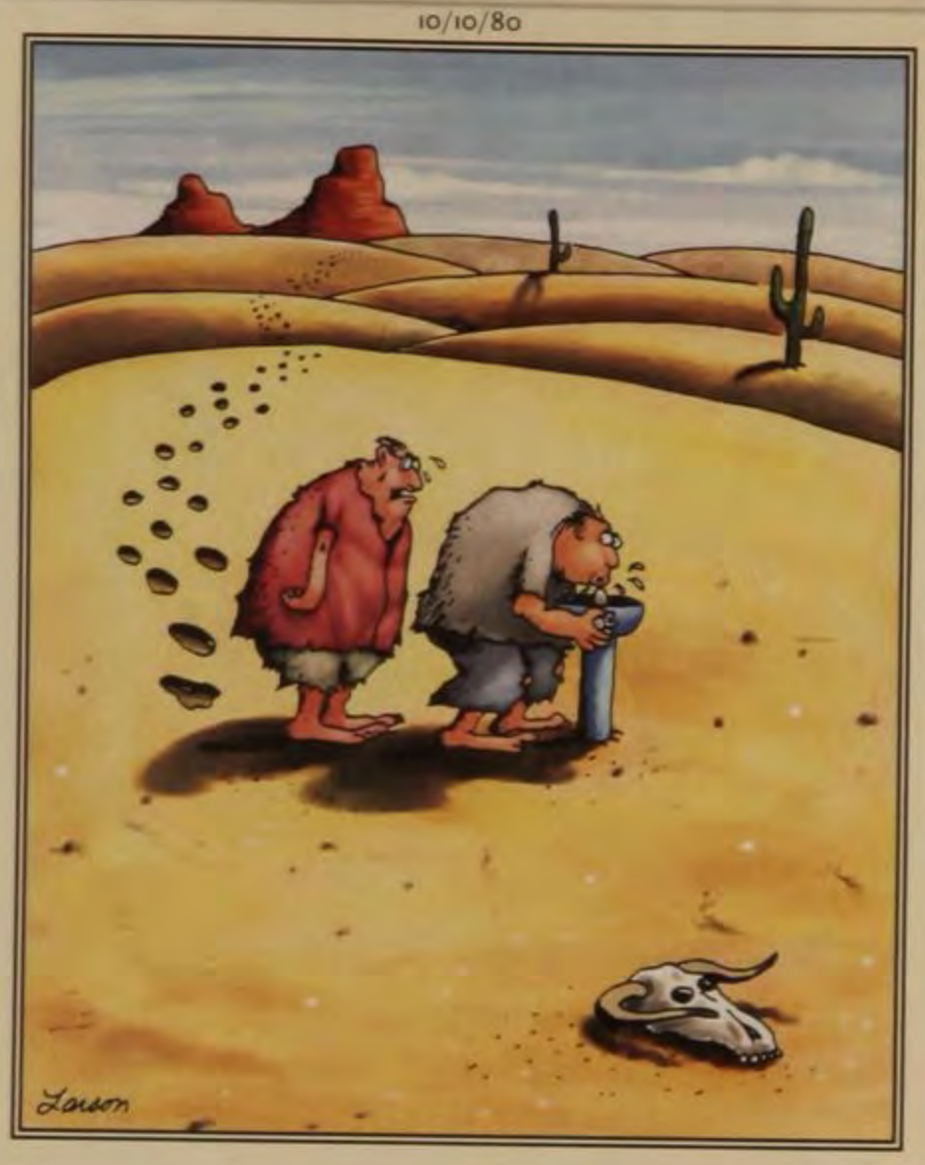
"I could have guessed. ... My friends all warned me that this breed will sometimes turn on you."

10/18/80



"Don't take it so hard. ... Everyone's got a story about the one that got away."

October 1980



"Hey c'mon! Don't put your mouth on it!"

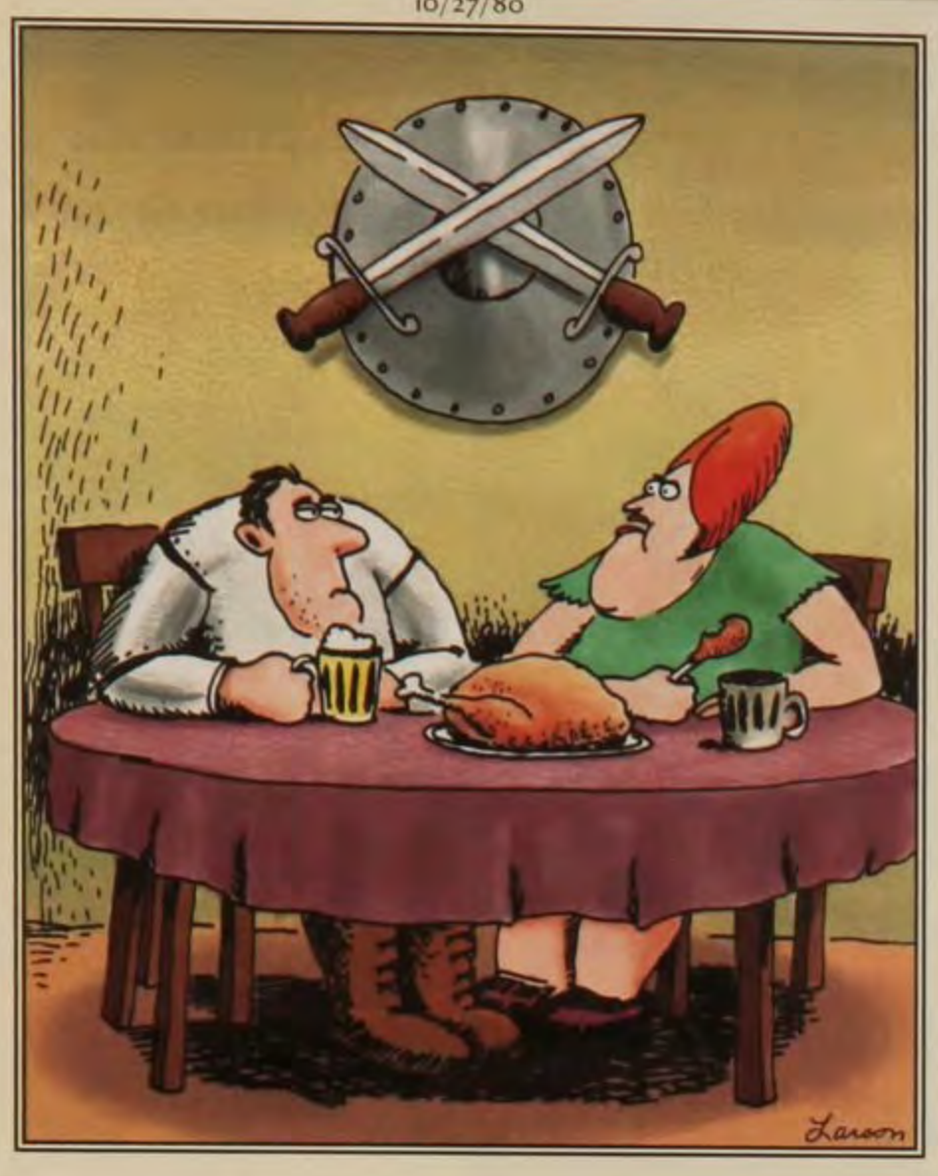
"Hey! Is that you, Dave? ... Small world!"

"And oh my goodness! ... Aren't the children getting *long!*"

"Hey, Buddy! Nobody tells me to go *there* and gets away with it!"

October 1980

10/27/80



"And another thing! ... I want you to be more assertive! I'm tired of everyone calling you Alexander the Pretty-Good!"

10/22/80

"Well I just think I've been putting up with this silly curse of yours long enough!"

10/25/80

"Well, it looks like Sylvia has latched on to another fly-by-night boyfriend."

10/29/80

"Gad! Here come those pesky Andersons again ... probably want to borrow a cup of water."

October 1980

"I seeeeeee you!"

"Just keep him calm for a couple of days. ...
He's got lockbody."

"Wait! Wait! Here's another one—the screams
of a man lost in the woods."

"I don't know where your father is tonight. ...
No doubt out bangin' his head against some tree."

November 1980

11/1/80

11/4/80

"Listen, Wadsworth ... as far as I'm concerned we can just go anchor somewhere else."

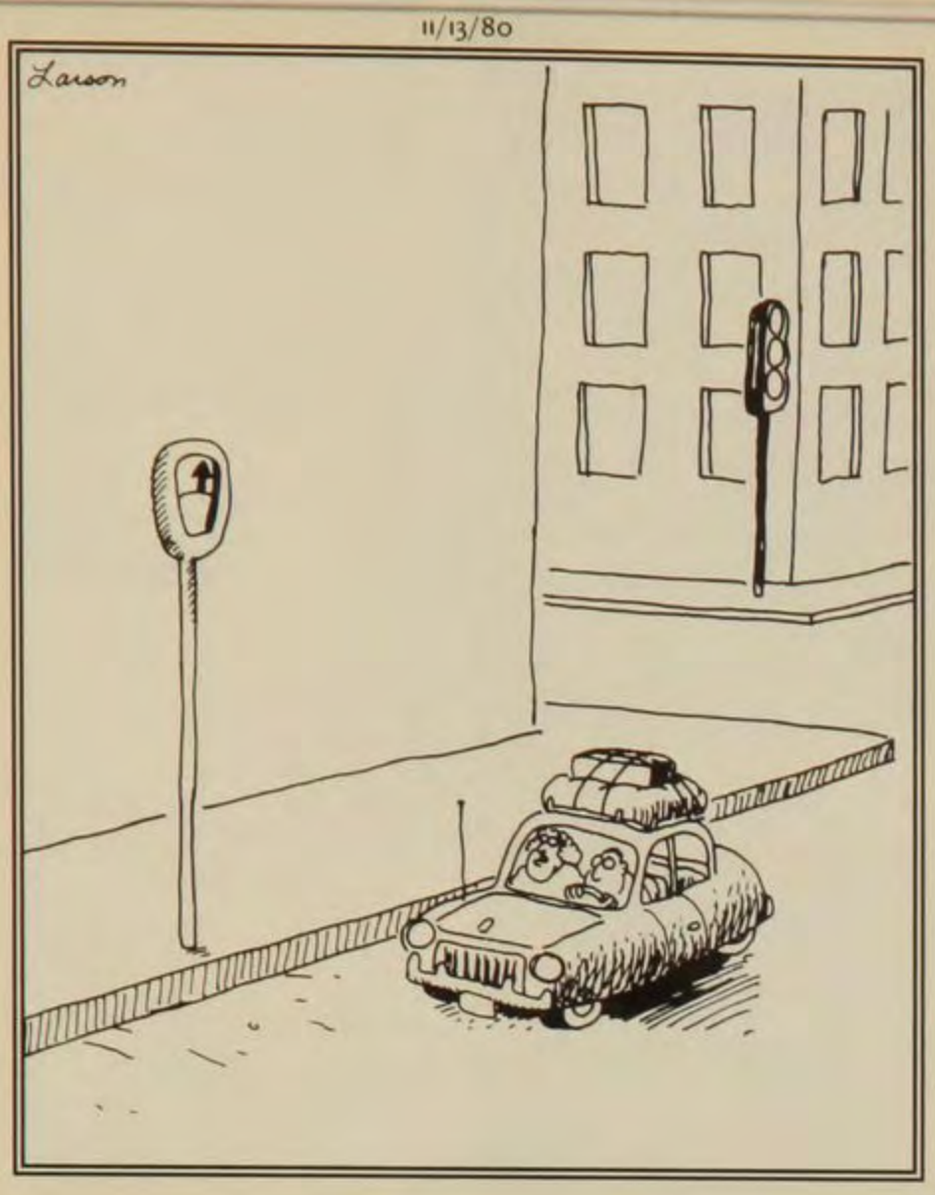
11/3/80

"Well ... since the elevator's power is dead, why don't we all just introduce ourselves?"

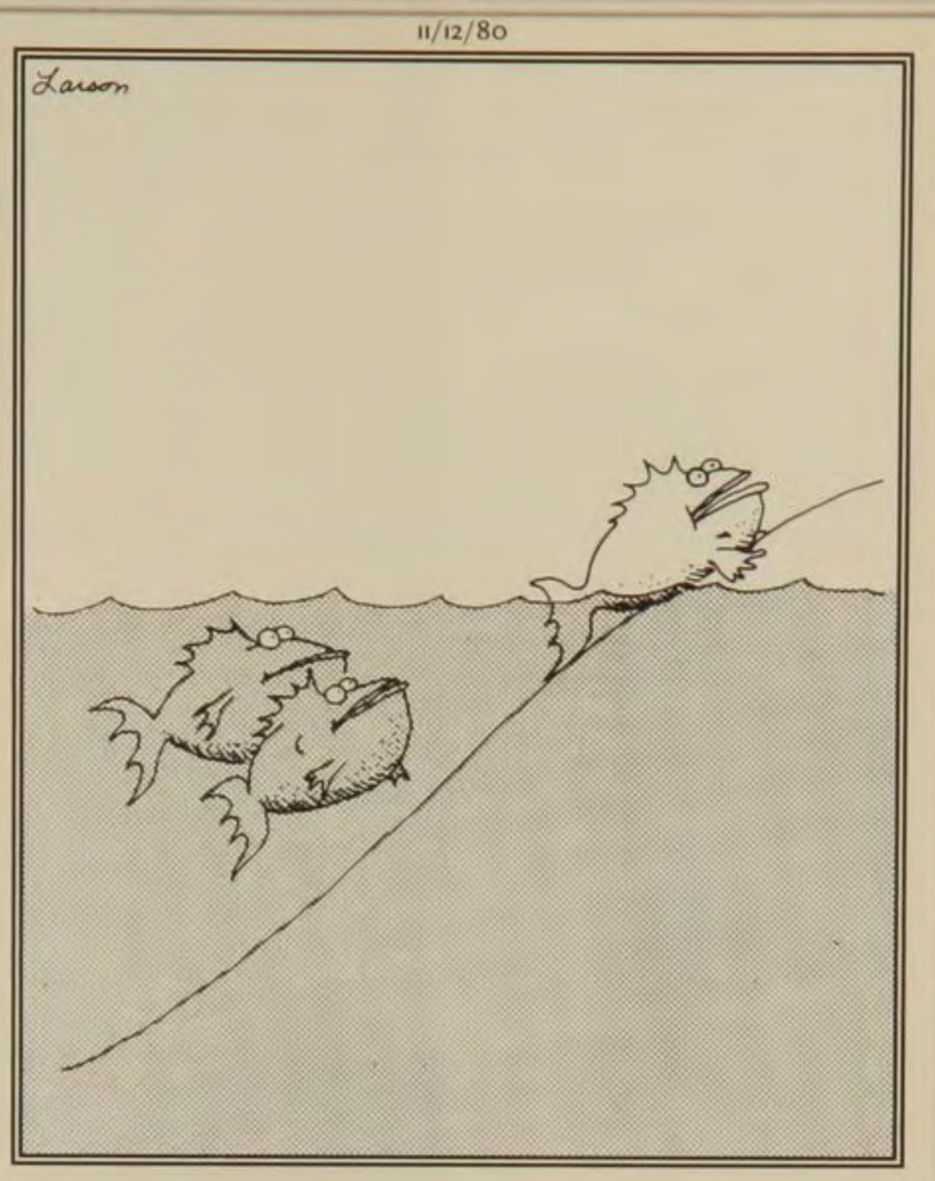
November 1980

"That settles it, Carl! ... From now on, you're getting only decaffeinated coffee!"

November 1980

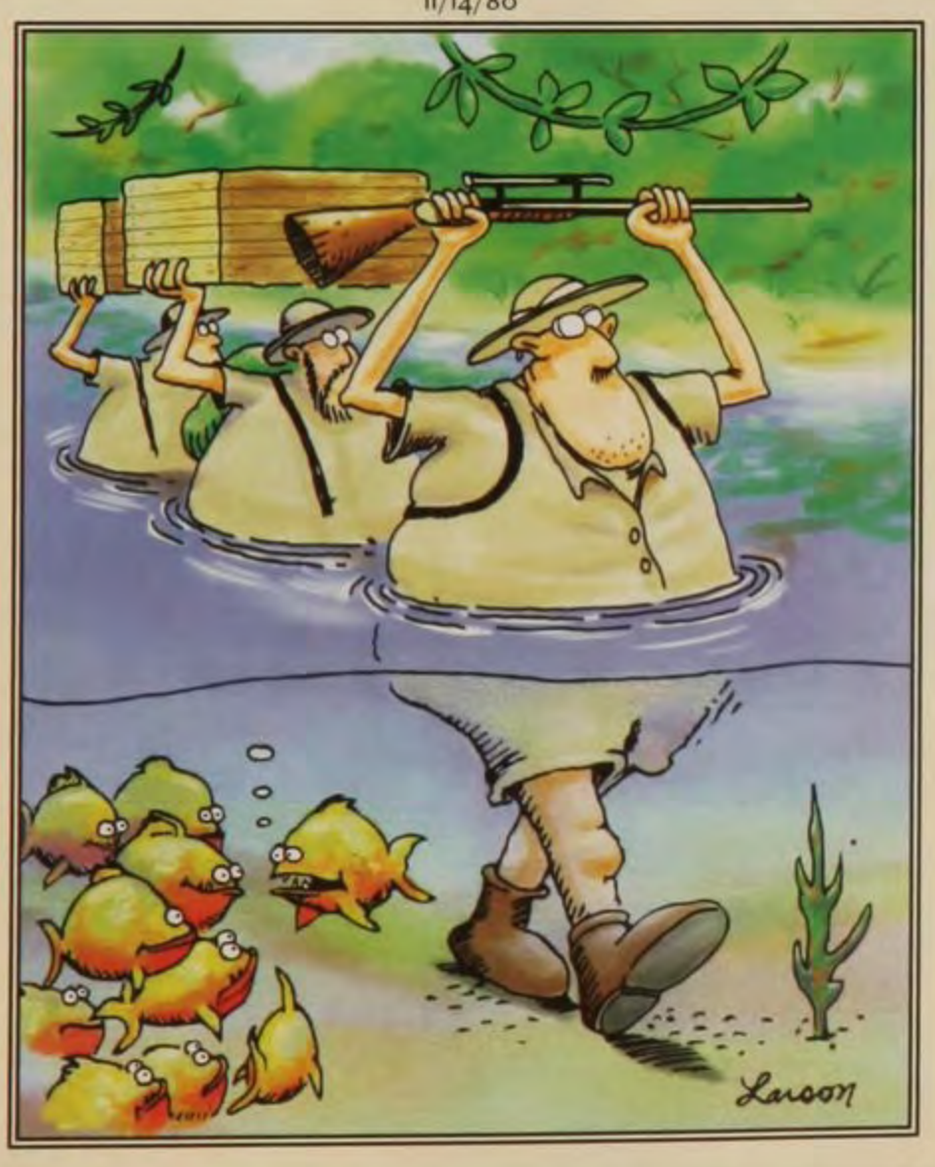


"Well, we both knew there'd be some adjustments moving from a small town to a big city."



"One small step for a fish, one giant leap for fishkind."

"Hey, c'mon now! ... You two were *made* for each other!"



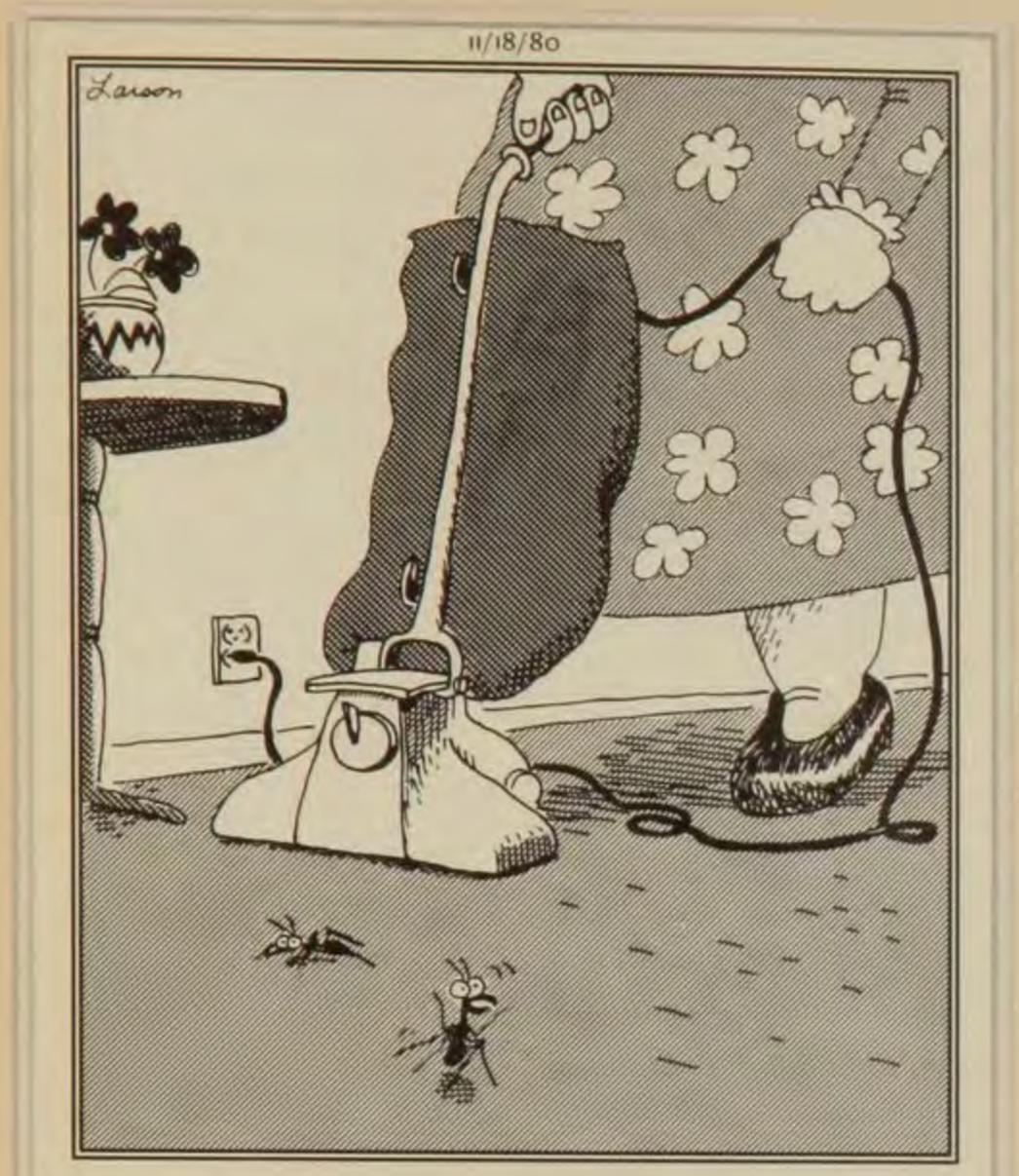
"Just nibble at first. ... But when you hear them yell 'Piranha!'—go for it."

November 1980

"One of the nicest evenings I've ever spent at the Wilsons'... and then you had to go and do that on the rug!"

"Excuse me, General Custer, sir ... but smoke signals say, 'Ready ... or ... not ... here ... we ... come.'"

November 1980



"Look out! ... It's a black hole!"

"Come on out. ... I think they're through."

November 1980

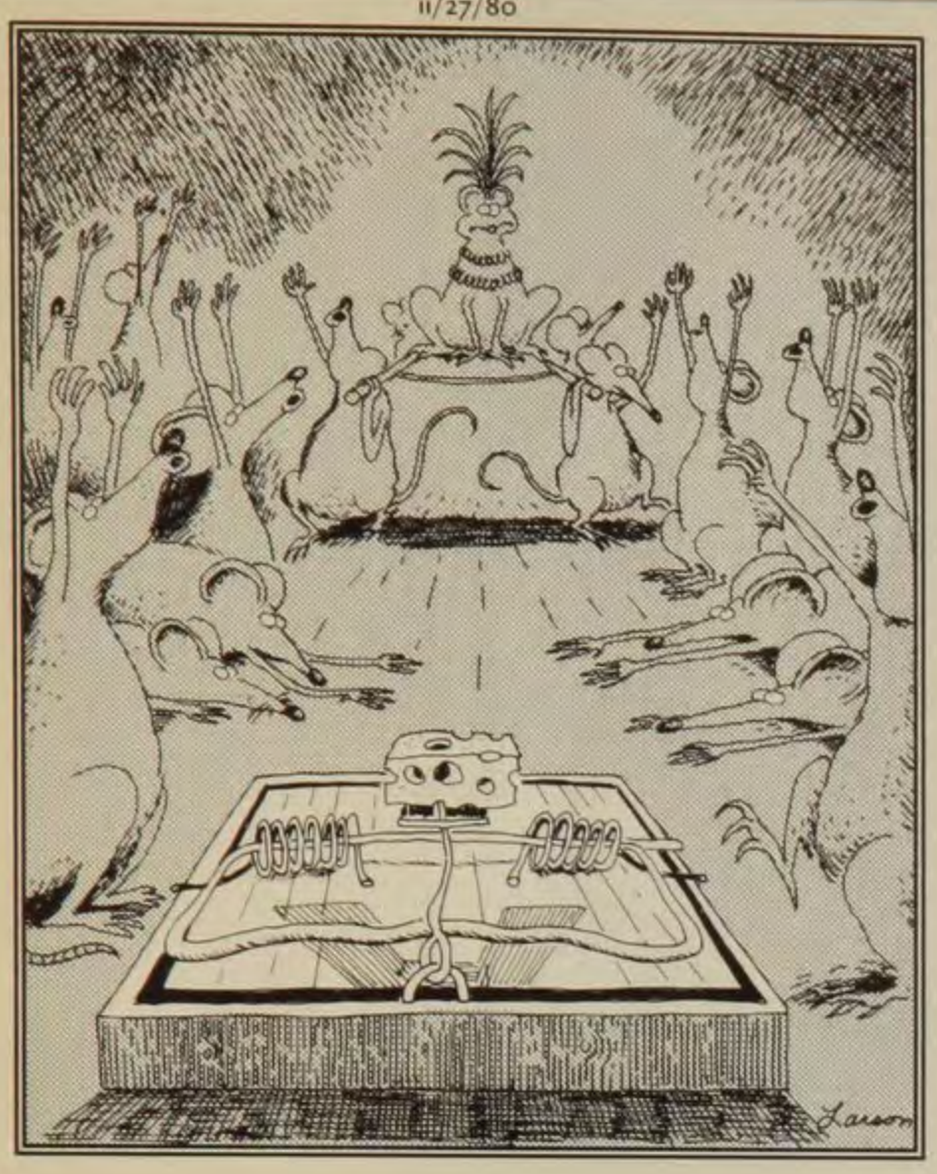
"Hey look, guys ... maybe we got the wrong address."

"Olé!"

"Oh, Sidney! Look! I *wasn't* snagged on the bottom!"

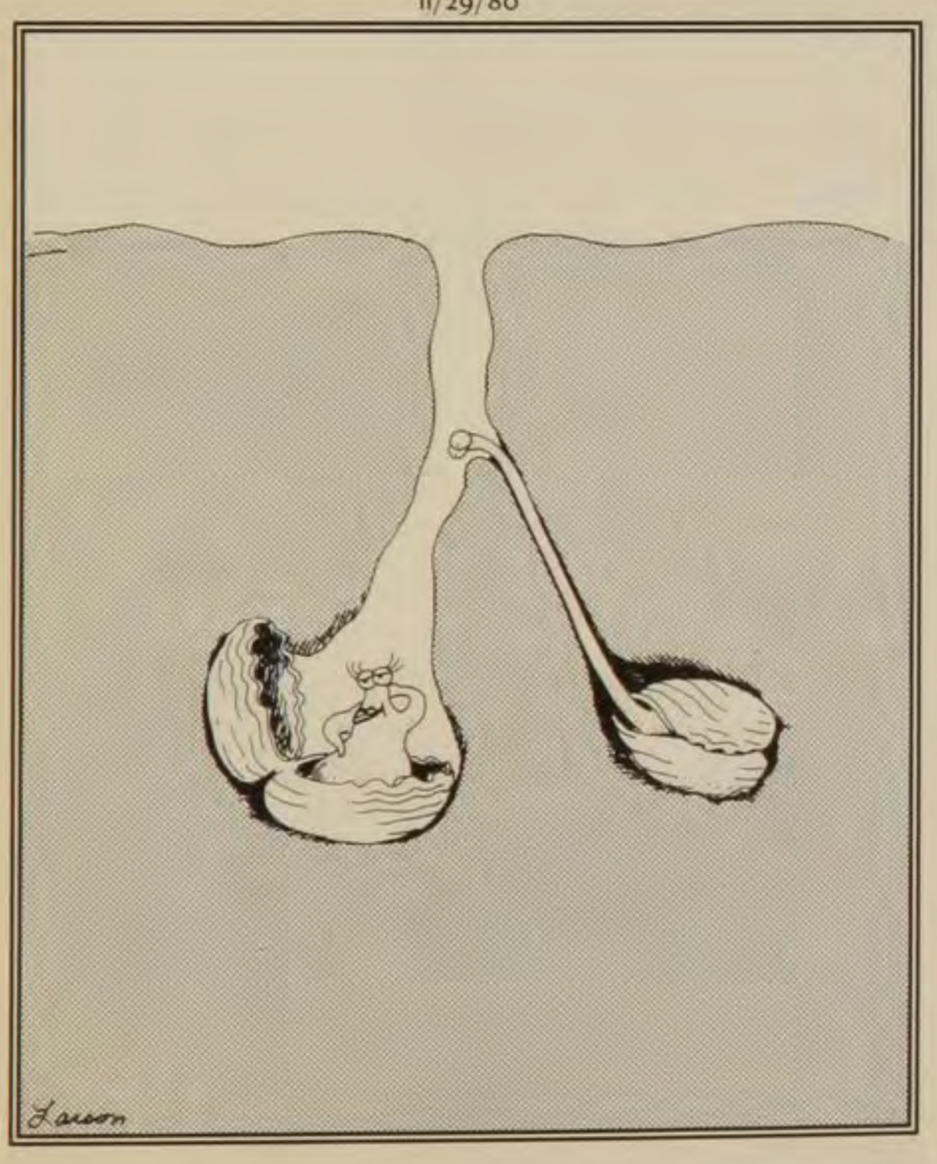
November 1980

11/27/80



11/28/80

11/29/80



Dec 13 1980

Dear Gary Larson
Your cartoon blips are the best thing happening in American journalism. For years I have followed the advice of M. Monroe, or someone, to watch the comics to find what's happening. Your wit and insight are a good sign.
Congratulations.

Timothy Leary

PS? Have you published a collection of your work yet. If not, please do so soon!!

December 1980

12/1/80

"See, Frank? Keep the light in their eyes and you can bag them without any trouble at all."

12/2/80

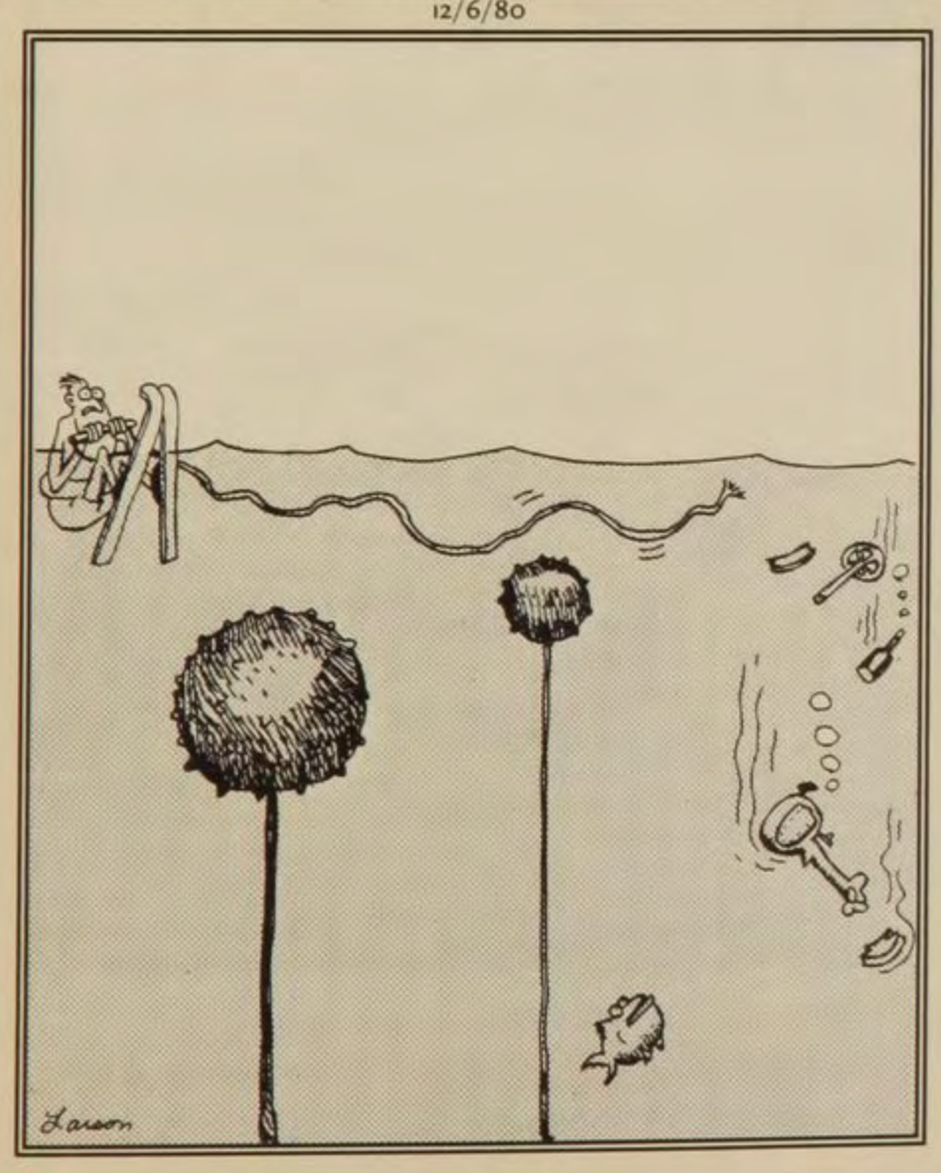
"I don't like the looks of this."

12/4/80

December 1980

12/5/80

12/6/80



12/8/80

"Go for it, Sidney! You've got it! You've got it! Good hands! Don't choke!"

December 1980

"The herring's nothin'. ... I'm going for the whole shmeer!"

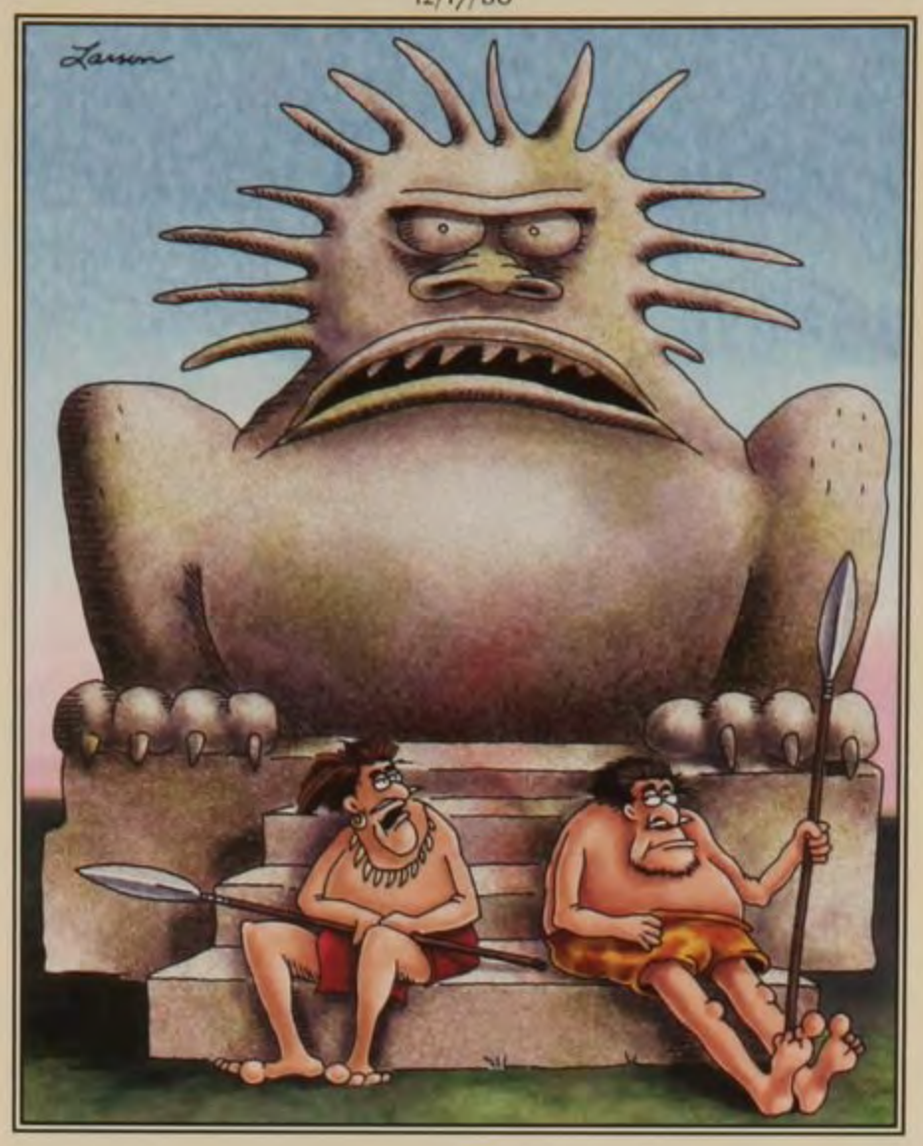
"Here he comes again ... and he's carrying the thundertooth."

"An excellent specimen ... the symbol of beauty, innocence, and fragile life. ... Hand me the jar of ether."

December 1980

12/15/80

12/17/80



"Twelve sacrifices already this week. ...
Thank Goran it's Friday!"

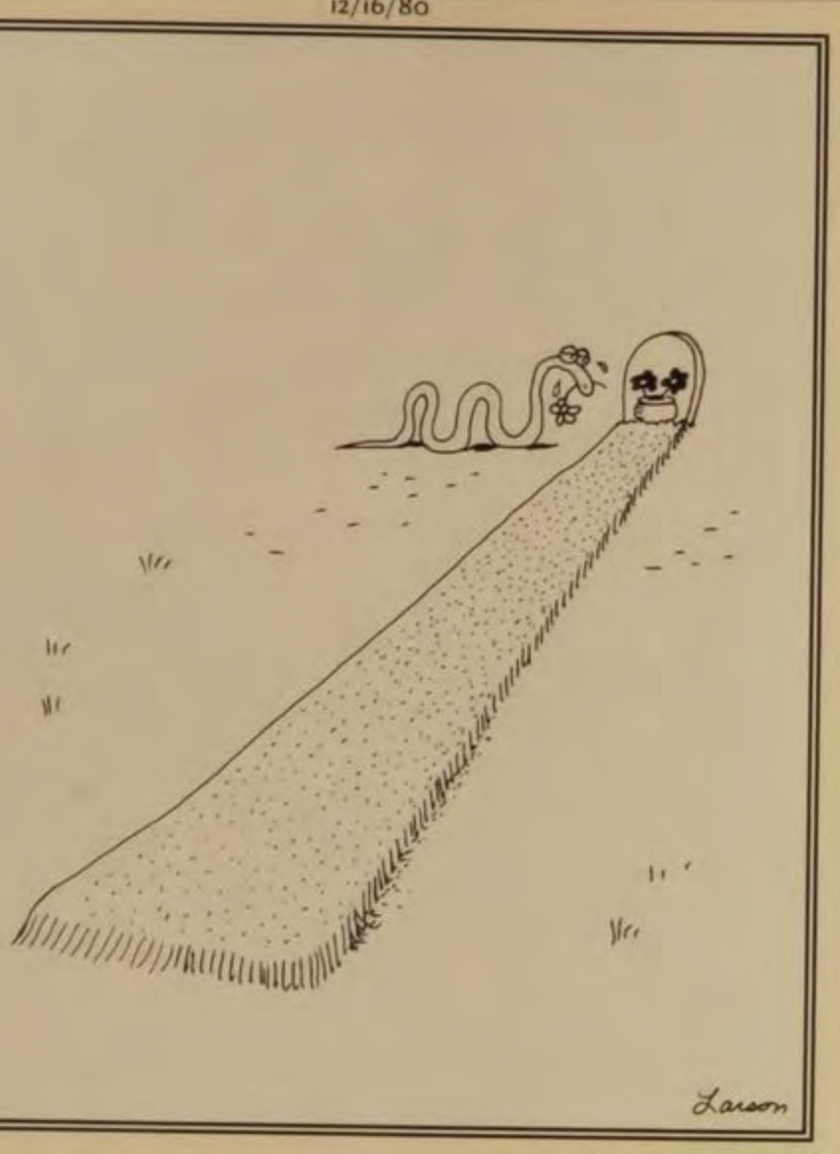
12/11/80

"Uh-oh—looks like the zipper has stuck on
that thing again."

12/13/80

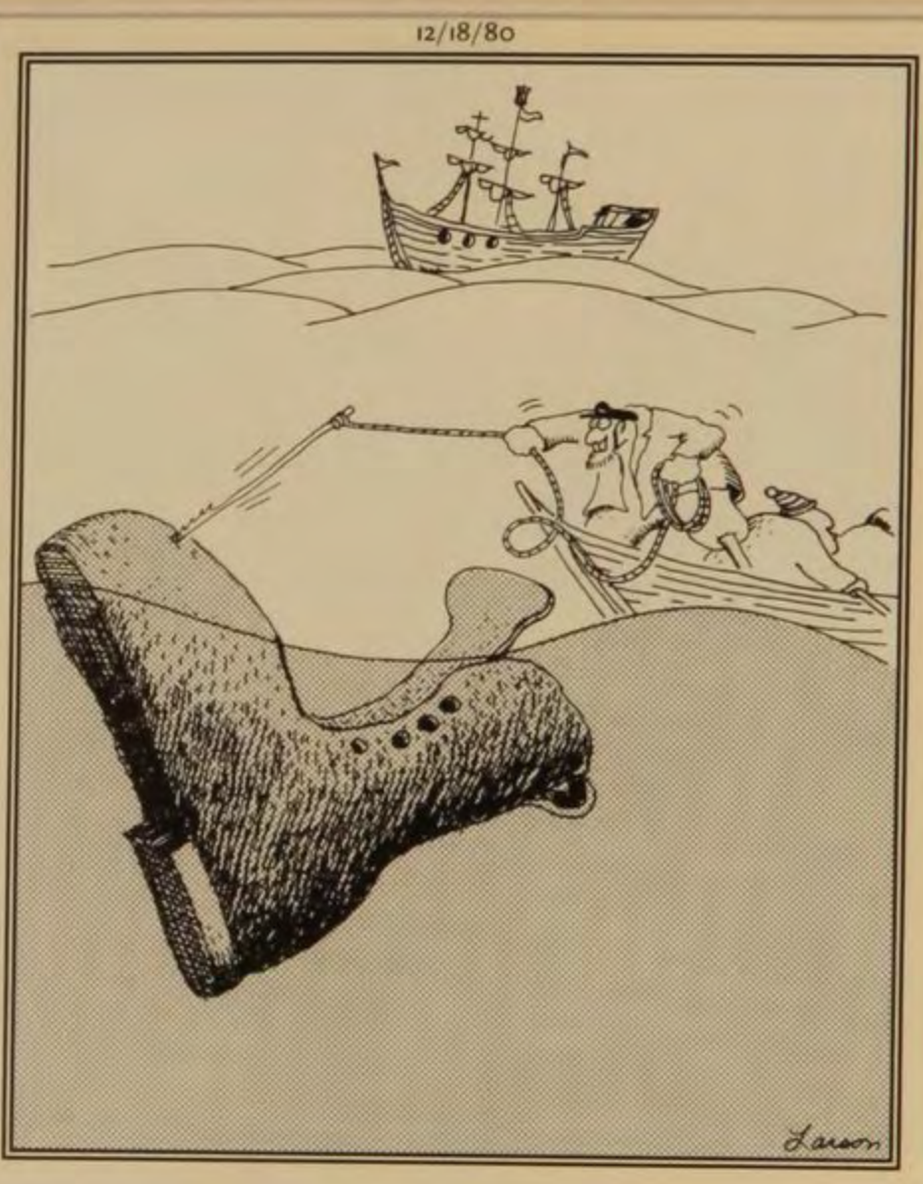
December 1980

12/16/80



Larson

12/18/80



Larson

12/19/80

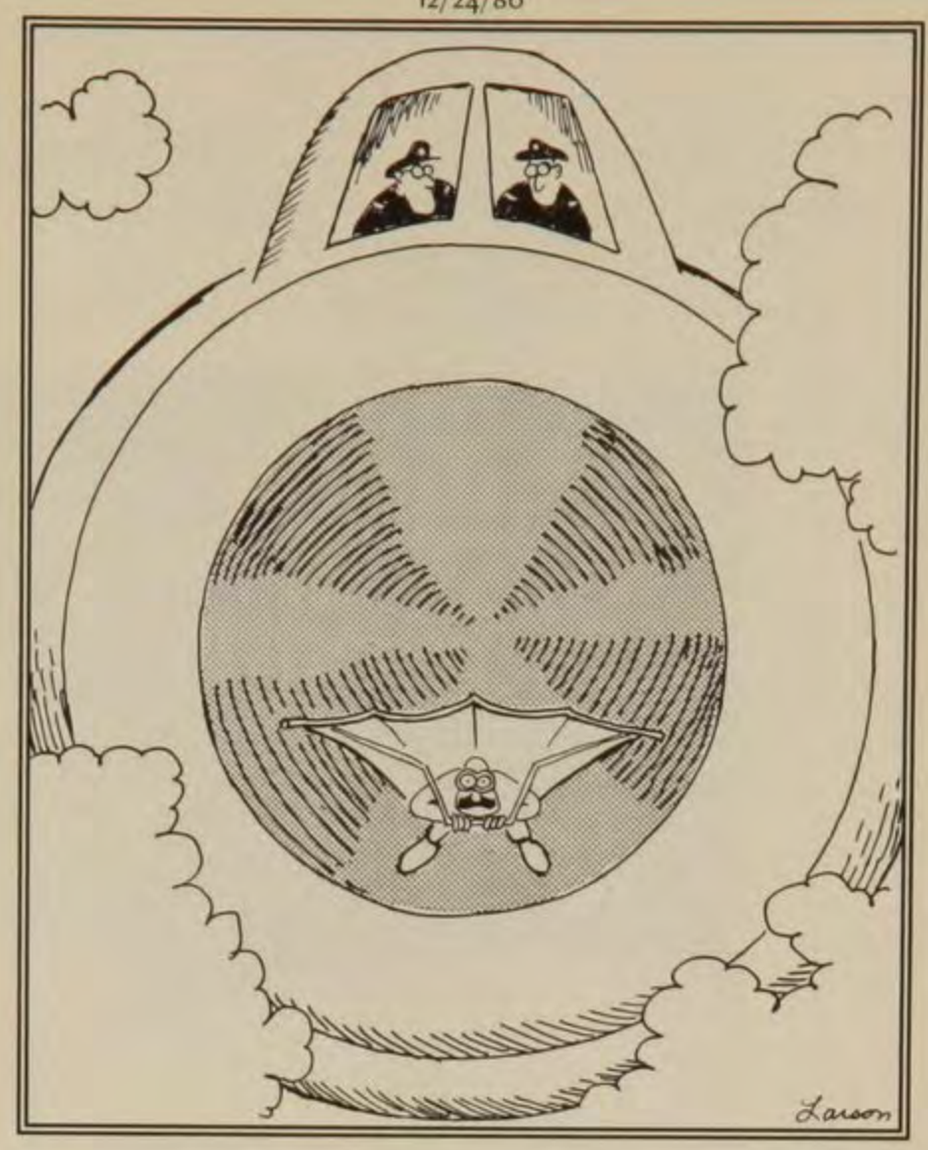
12/20/80

December 1980

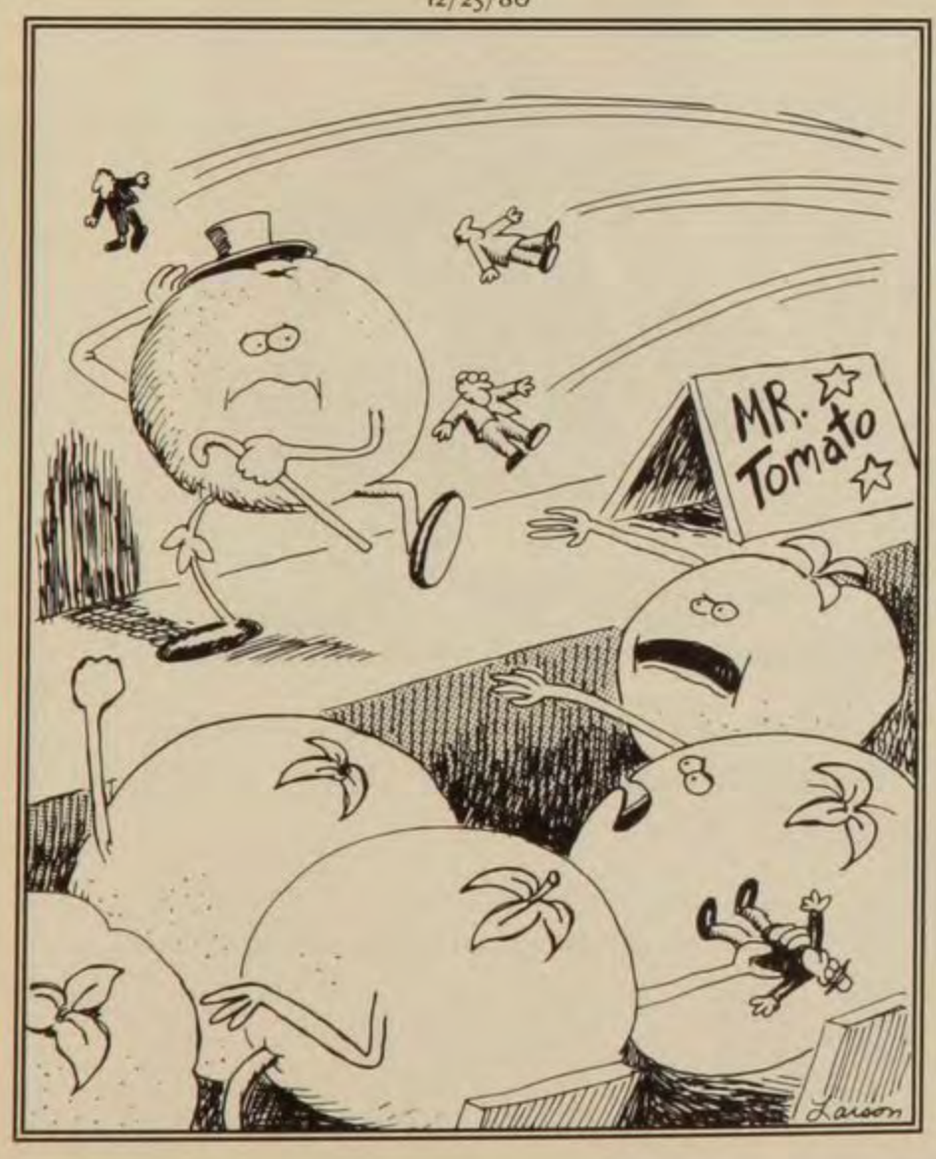
12/23/80

"Quick! Back the other way!
Back the other way!"

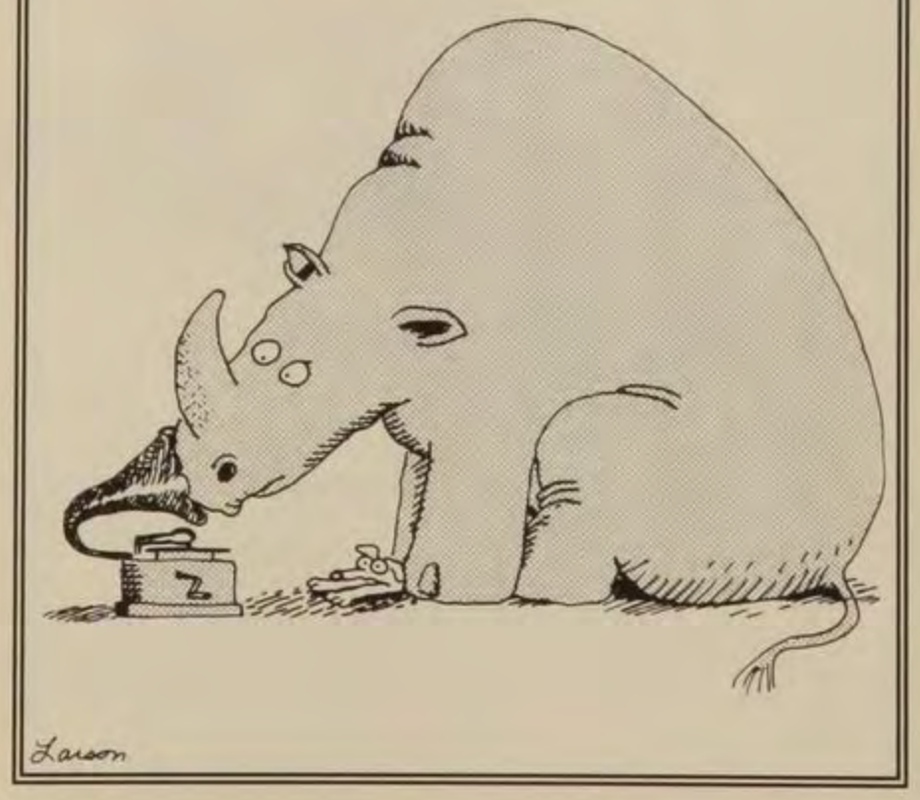
12/24/80



12/25/80



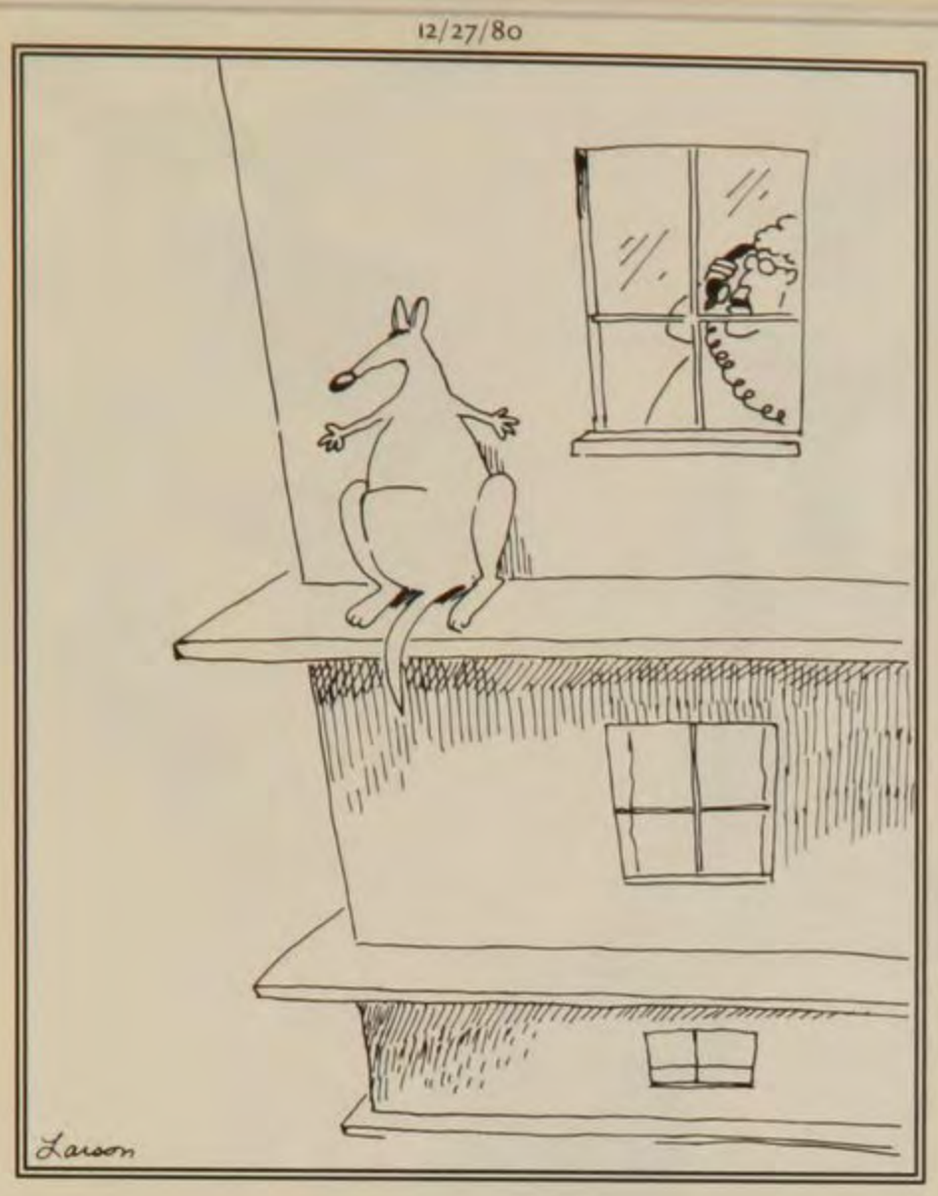
12/26/80



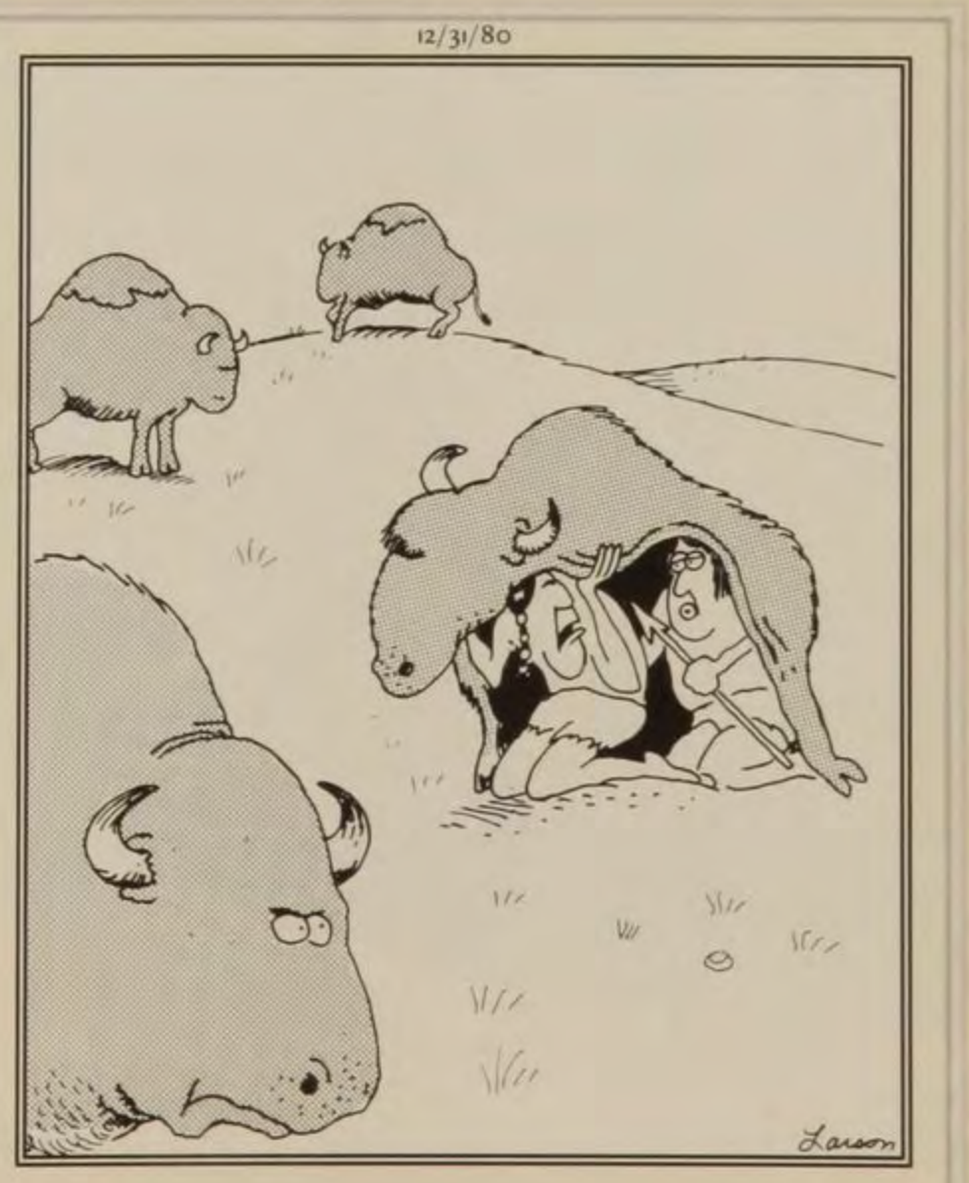
December 1980

"And I've only one thing to say about all these complaints I've been hearing about ... *Venison!*"

December 1980



"Well, you better get someone over here right away. ... He really looks like he's going to jump."



"I said act nonchalant—that doesn't mean whistling!"

Larson

With a Friend Like This ...

Many years ago, I traveled with my friend Ernie to a remote, mountainous area in northern Mexico. Ernie was the curator of reptiles at our local zoo, and he had invited me to accompany him on a mission to capture and bring back a little-known species of Mexican king snake. (Okay—it's not everyone's dream vacation, I grant you; but getting a tan on a beach somewhere always gave me the willies.) Oh, one other thing: Ernie was insane. Not clinically insane, of course—just your garden variety, watch-your-ass-when-you're-around-this-person kind of insane.

One afternoon we had been exploring a potential king snake habitat when I turned over a rock and discovered a couple of huge whip scorpions. (Some people call them vinegarroons, but for the three entomologists who have always dogged my trail on these details, I'll formally identify them as *Mastigoproctus giganteus*.)

I wanted to photograph these interesting critters, but I had left my camera back at camp. I did, however, have a large collecting jar in my backpack. Gingerly, I herded the slow-moving scorpions into the container, figuring I would simply schlep the happy couple back to camp, photograph them, and release them later. But we didn't get back to camp until dusk, so the photo-op would have to wait a day. I set the jar aside, next to some gear.

The next morning, warm and cozy inside my sleeping bag, I awoke to hear Ernie moving about, making a fire and getting breakfast together. I was reluctant to get up myself, since it was always so cold in the mornings before the sun got a good grip on the day. So I just lay there in my bag with only my face exposed. I still remember the tranquility of it all—surrounded by saguaro cacti, listening to the crackling fire, staring up at the Mexican sky.

That's when Ernie walked over. He paused and stood over me, then lifted a corner of my bag with one arm and plunged his other arm deep inside. He quickly withdrew it and leaped backward. A few seconds later, he was doubled up with laughter.

I still wasn't fully awake, and I remember just looking at him, wondering, what was the deal? And then I saw something in his hand. It was a jar. *The* jar. Whip Scorpion Inn. And the Inn was now vacant.

The basic scenario came groggily into focus. Ernie plus jar, minus whip scorpions, plus strange behavior (common with Ernie), plus laughter equals WHIP SCORPIONS (or, technically, *Mastigoproctus giganteus*) IN MY SLEEPING BAG!

There are people who claim your entire life flashes before you when disaster is imminent. I assure you that if the disaster involves something that looks like this (close to life-size, I might add) …

your life will definitely not flash. This is all you're going to see.

I was now awake. Whip scorpions are not dangerous (no stingers), but look at this animal again. I ask you: Does it matter it can't sting?

It's interesting to note how quickly the nervous system can switch gears. Without a hitch, my brain shifted from dreamily contemplating the Natural World to the more basic there's-a-scorpion-in-my-bed mode. As a cartoonist, I enjoyed plumbing this aspect of human nature, the phobias and common fears many of us have to one degree or another—I just don't like to be personally involved in the research. (Especially, I might add, when it involves an arachnid whose Latin name ends with *giganteus*.)

I didn't bother with the zipper; I just shot out of that bag as if it was on fire—screaming, I'm afraid, like a girl cartoonist. When I finally stopped jumping around, one of the whip scorpions was clinging to my shirt collar. Another round of jumping, please. Between fits of laughter, Ernie kept saying, "God, if only I had a camera!"

Ah, friends. To any scorpion fanciers out there, rest assured that the little creatures were unharmed. And likewise rest assured, I did get my revenge on Ernie—but that's a story he can share in his own book.

January 1981

"My stomach? ... *Your* stomach's rumbling!"

"That won't be necessary, Carl. ... I think we can safely conclude that they're definitely not afraid of mice."

"I don't know which one of you is doing it, but at the end of the sonata we shall refrain from playing 'Shave and a Haircut.'"

January 1981

1/7/81

"I told you guys to slow down and take it easy or something like this would happen."

1/6/81

"You idiot! ... Twenty bucks for a smoke alarm and we don't even know what the stuff is!"

1/9/81

January 1981

1/8/81

"Disgusting! ... It's just a sort of heavy huffing and puffing."

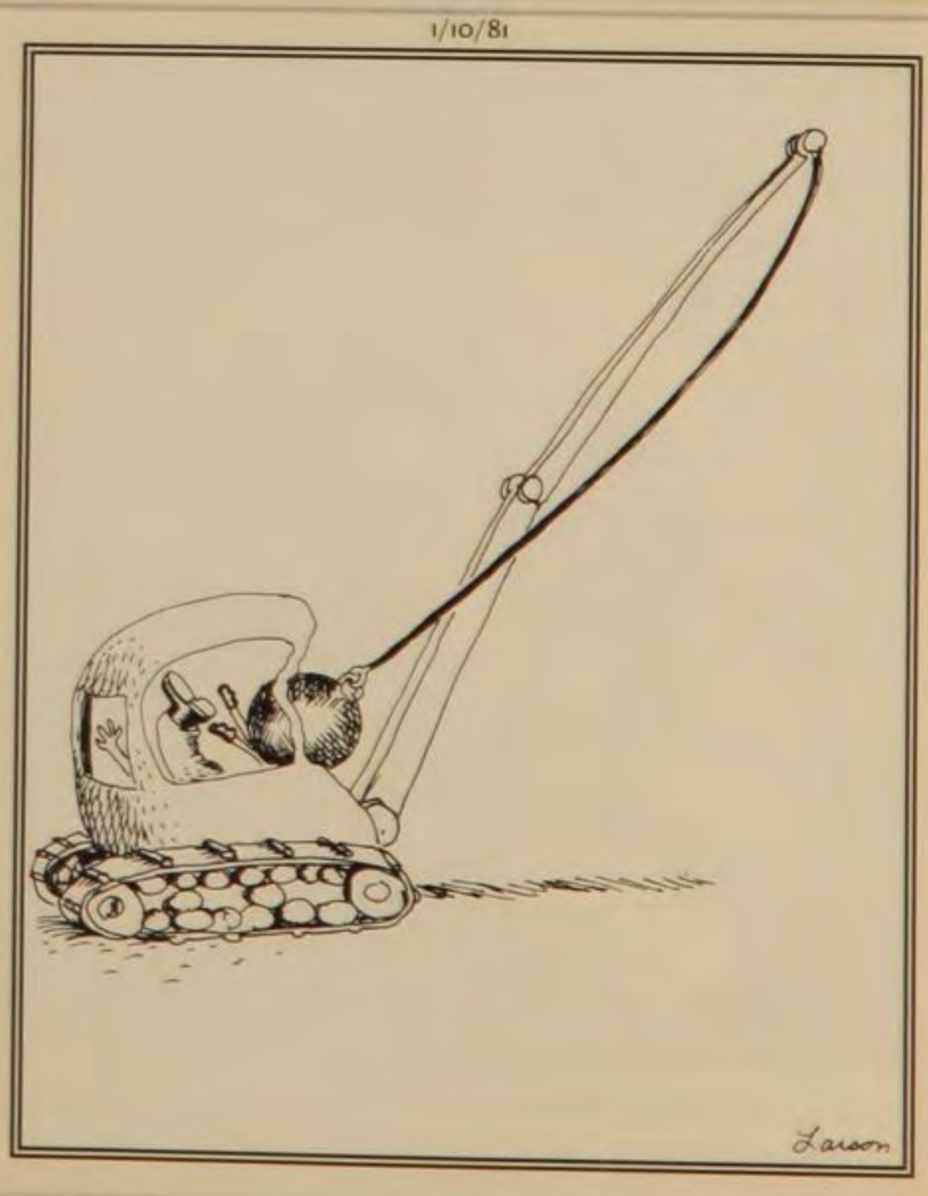
1/12/81

"Well that's how it happened, Sylvia. ... I kissed this frog, he turns into a prince, we get married, and WHAM! ... I'm stuck at home with a bunch of pollywogs."

1/13/81

"Come out of that cave and meet your doom, you miserable dragon! You can't hide in there forever, you overgrown chameleon!"

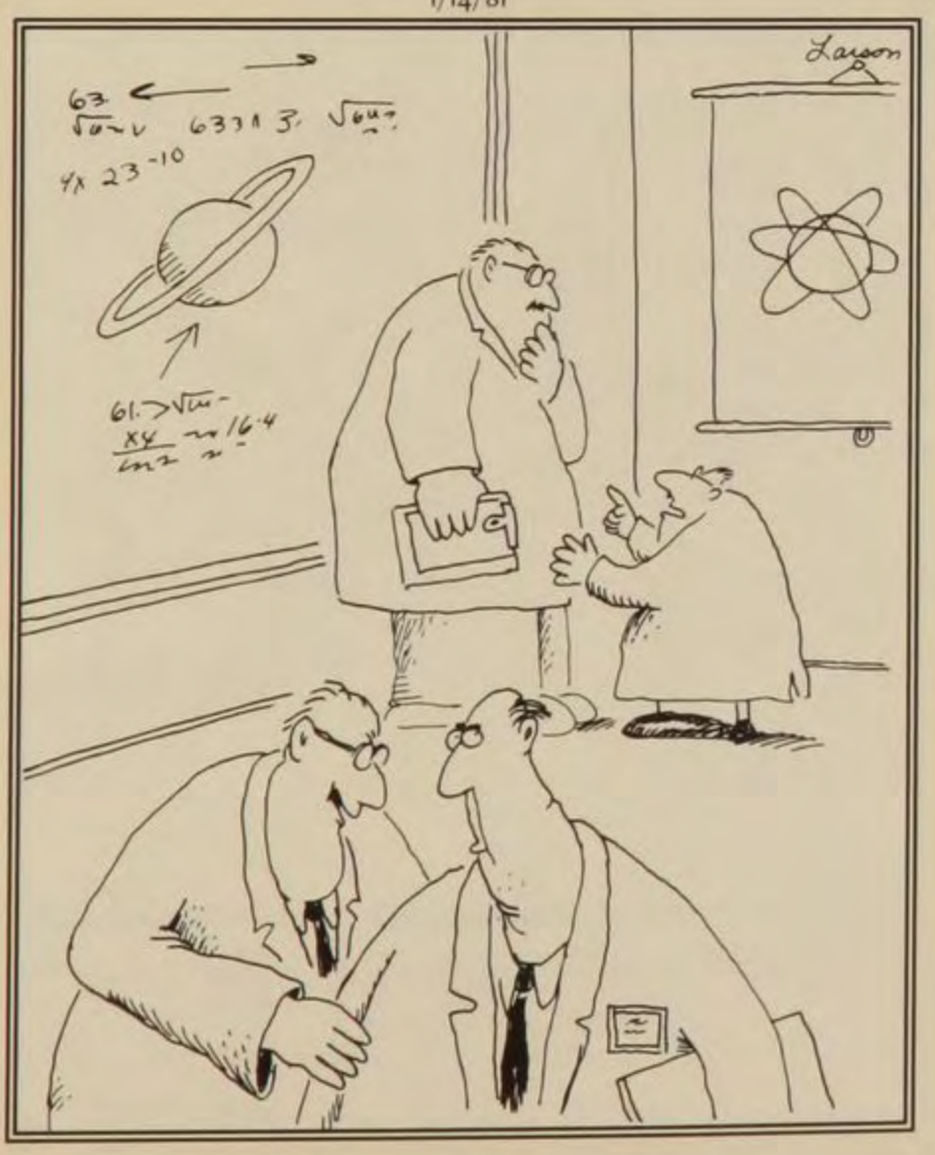
1/10/81



January 1981

"And now, standing at my side, I give you the man who conquered Everest, the Matterhorn, Kilimanjaro ..."

"Sure—but can you make him drink?"

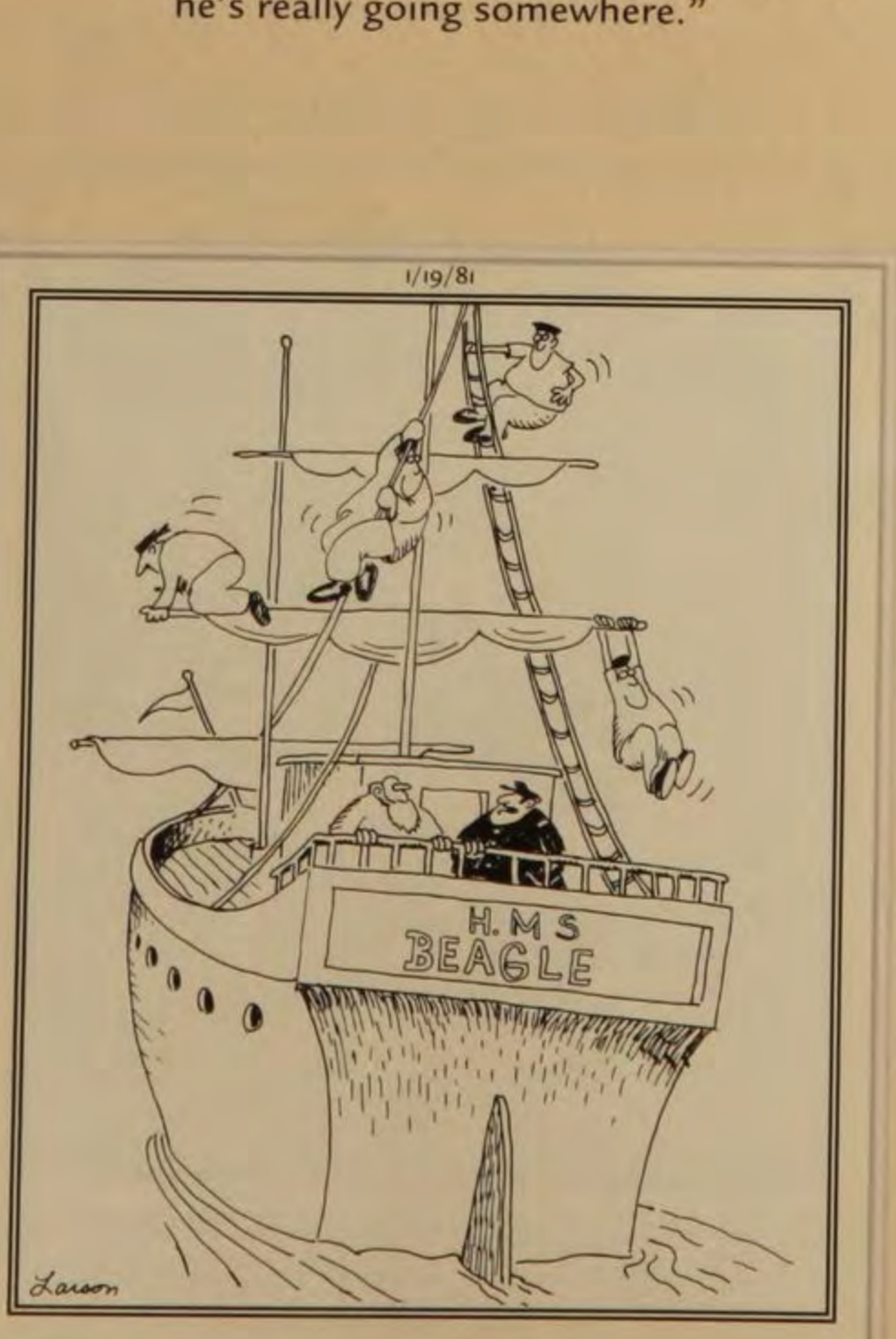


"There goes Williams again ... trying to win support for his Little Bang theory."

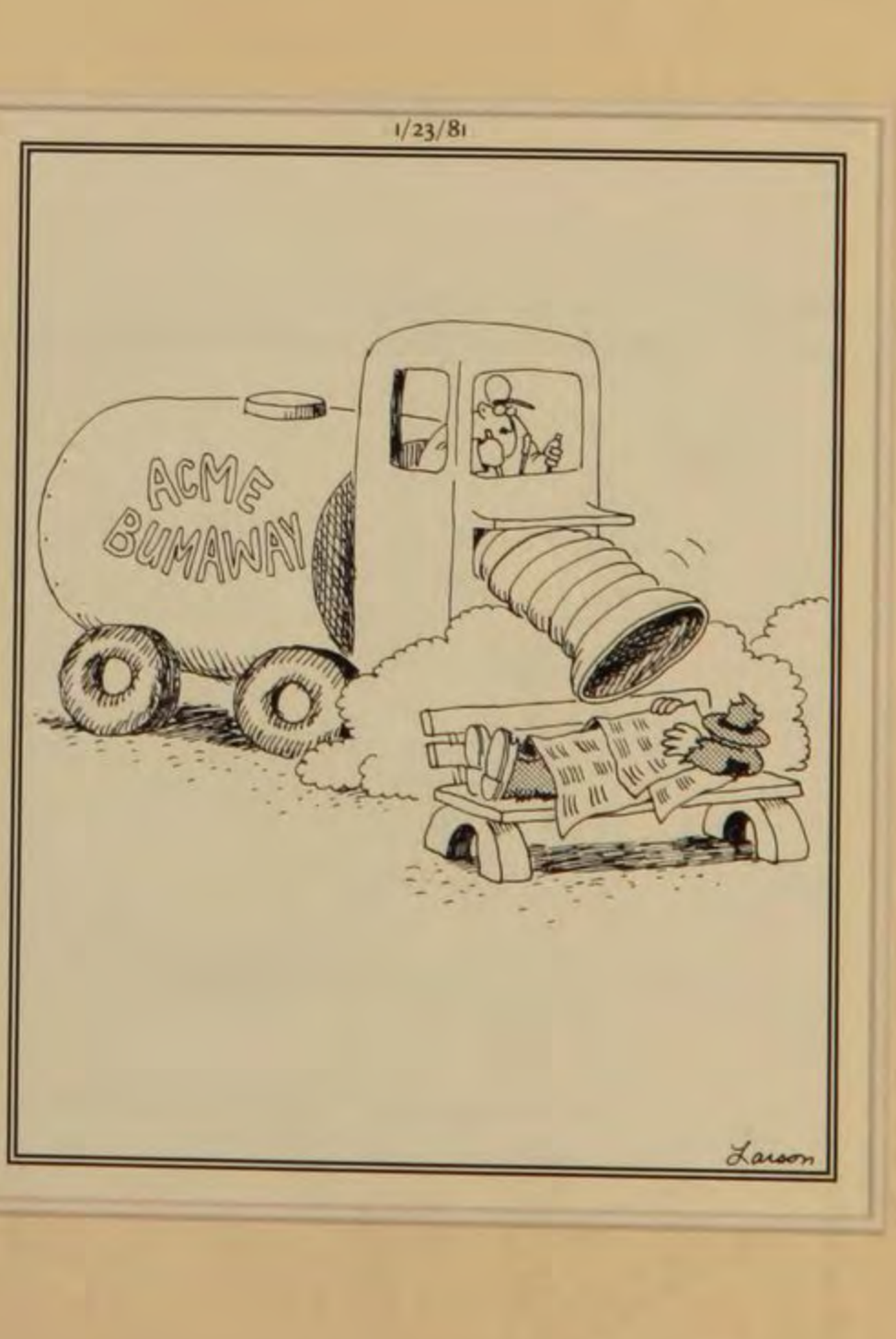
"I'm afraid his leg is broken, Ma'am. ... He'll have to be shot."

January 1981

"I'm leaving you for another, Zog. ... His cranium is larger, his thumbs are more opposable, and he's really going somewhere."



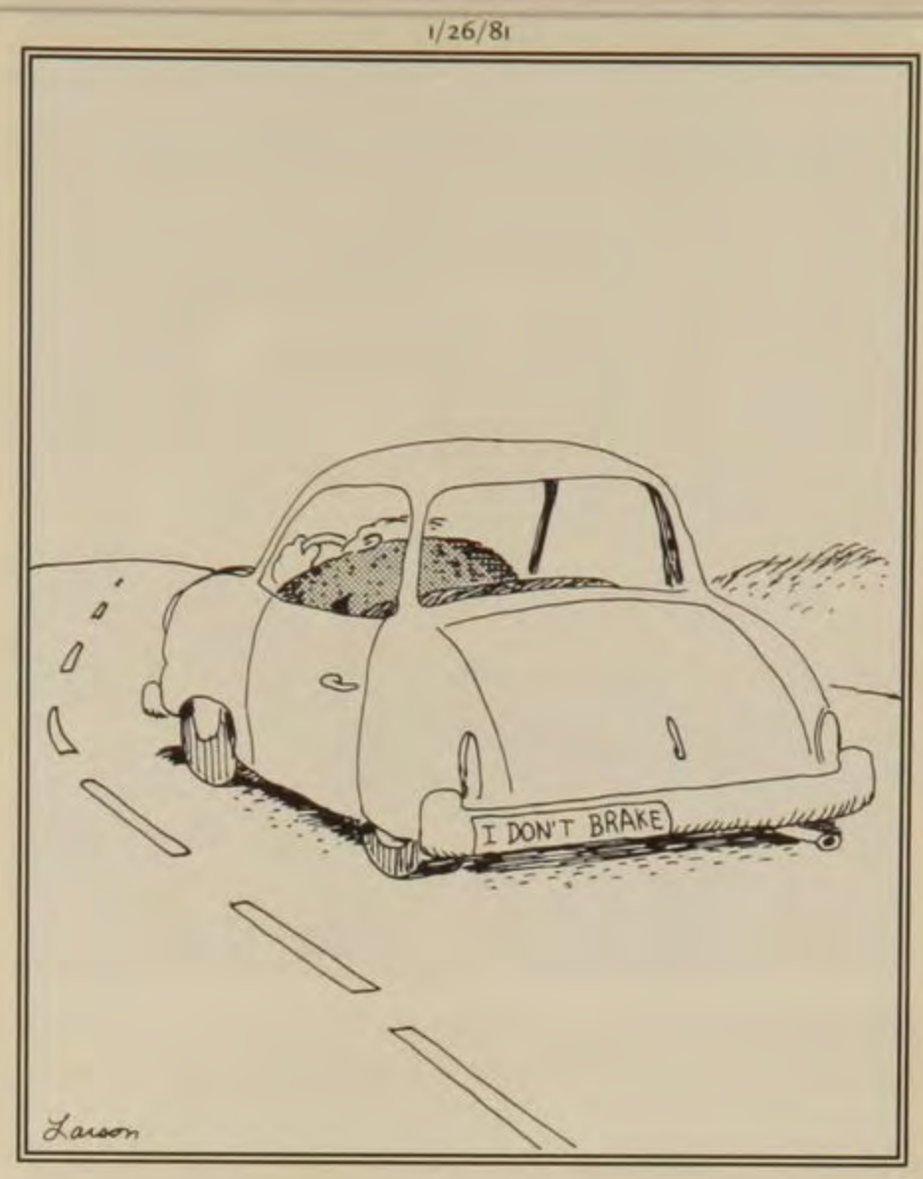
"Well, Mr. Darwin ... have you reached any conclusions so far?"



January 1981

1/24/81

1/26/81



1/27/81

1/28/81

January 1981

1/21/81

"Hold still, Carl! ... Don't ... move ... an ... *inch!*"

1/29/81

"Gee, I don't know, Eddie ... how many college students do you think you could eat at one time?"

1/30/81

"C'mon, Sylvia ... where's your spirit of adventure?"

1/31/81

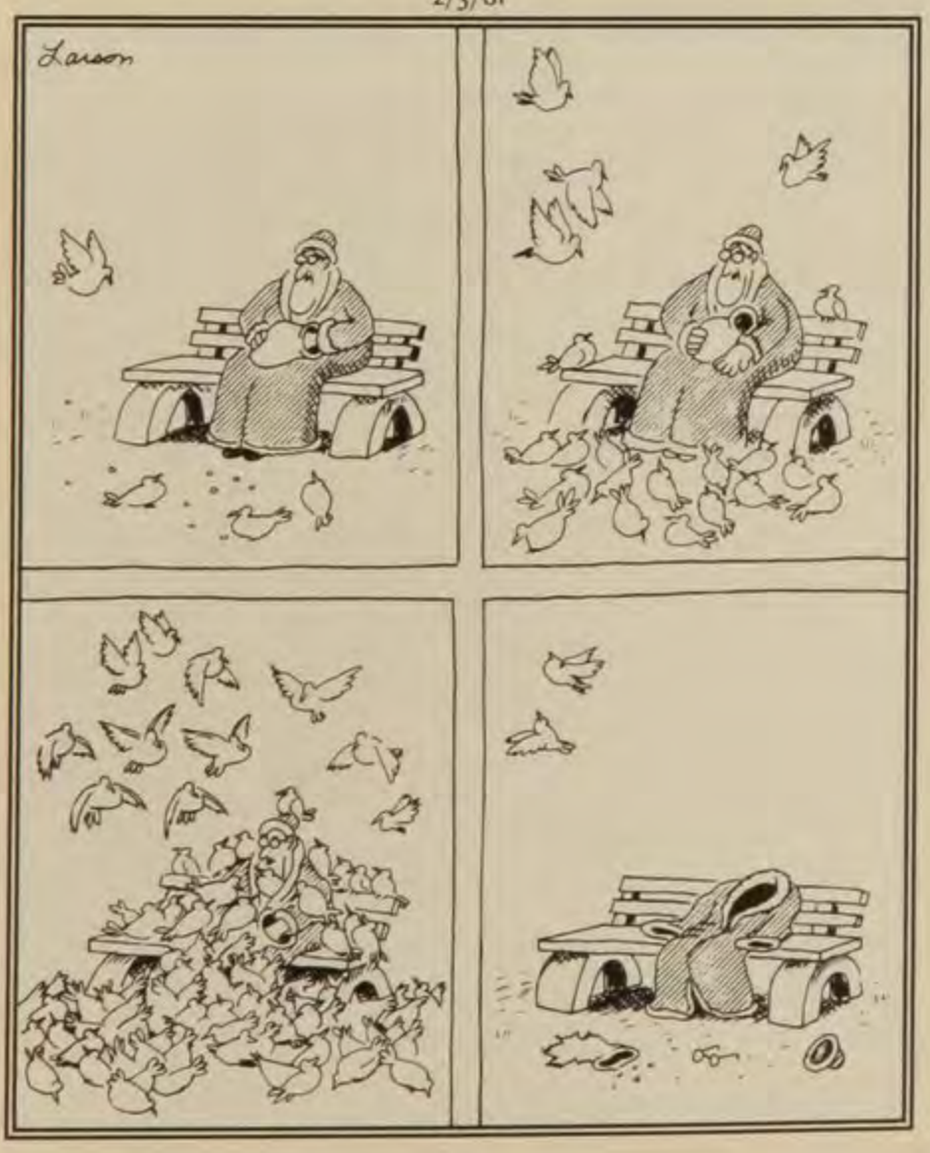
"Bird calls! Bird calls, you fool! ... Not mountain lions!"

February 1981

2/2/81

2/3/81

2/5/81



2/6/81

February 1981

"Lester! Wake up! Lester! ... I think I heard footsteps."

"I'm not sure, Al, but we sure got into a mess of 'em."

February 1981

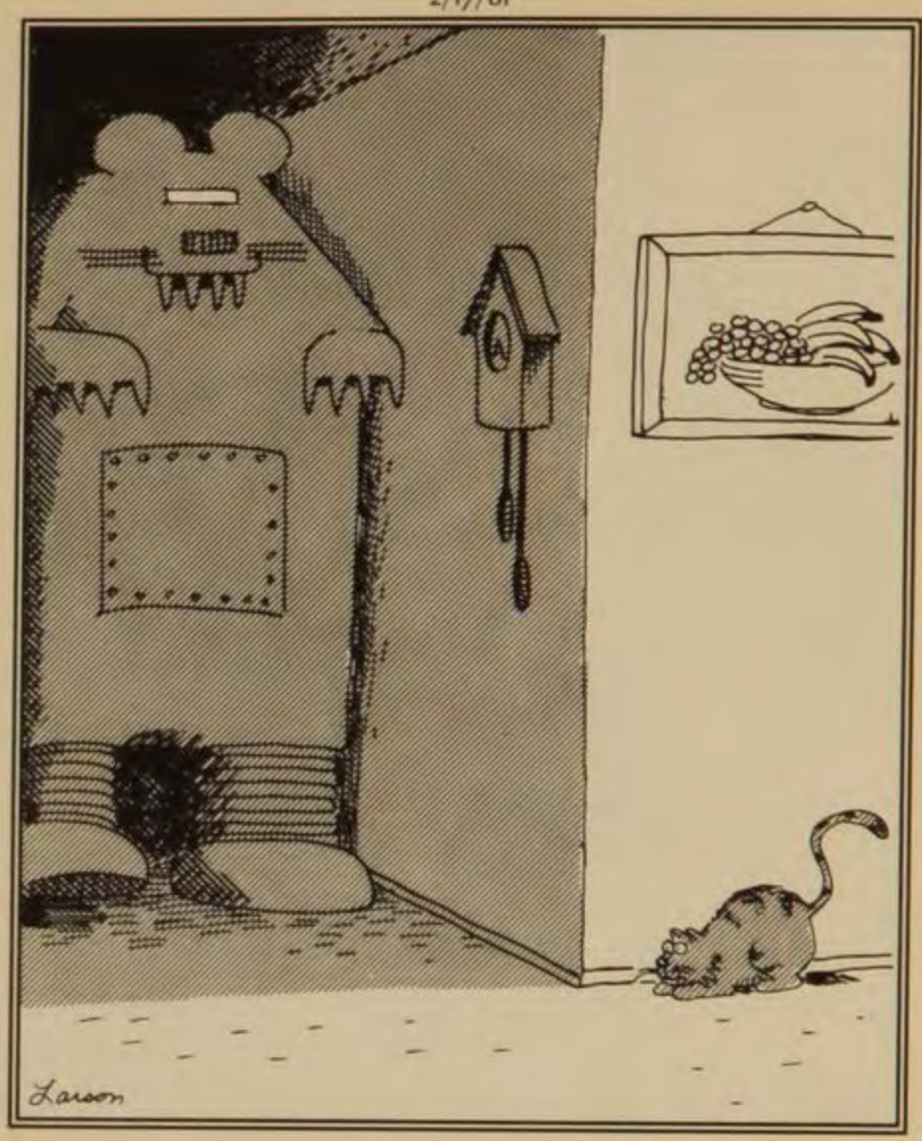
"This is General Sherman! The march to the sea is over! Turn back, I say! HALT! HAAAAAALT!"

"Thag, this is Noona. Noona, this is Thag. ... Thag is a Hunter and Gatherer."

February 1981

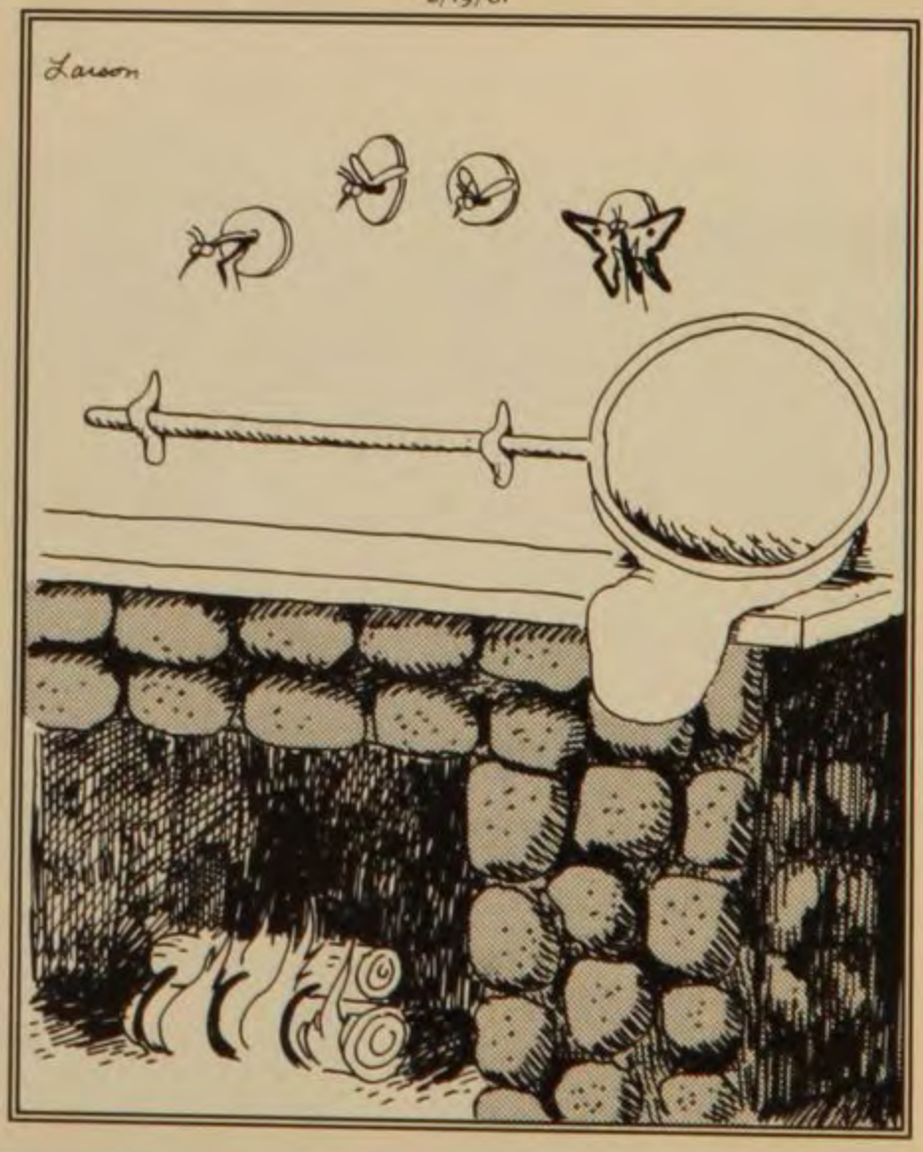
2/14/81

2/17/81

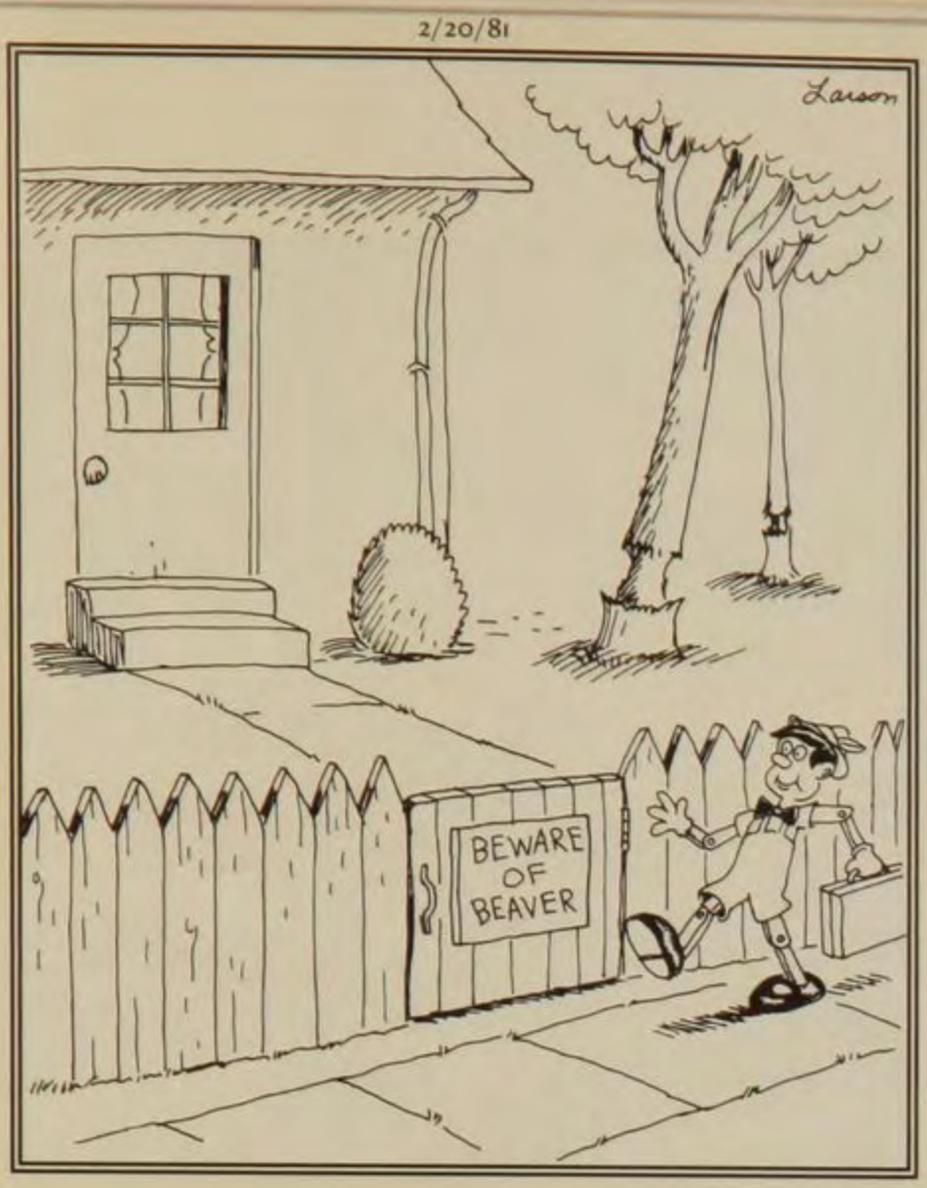


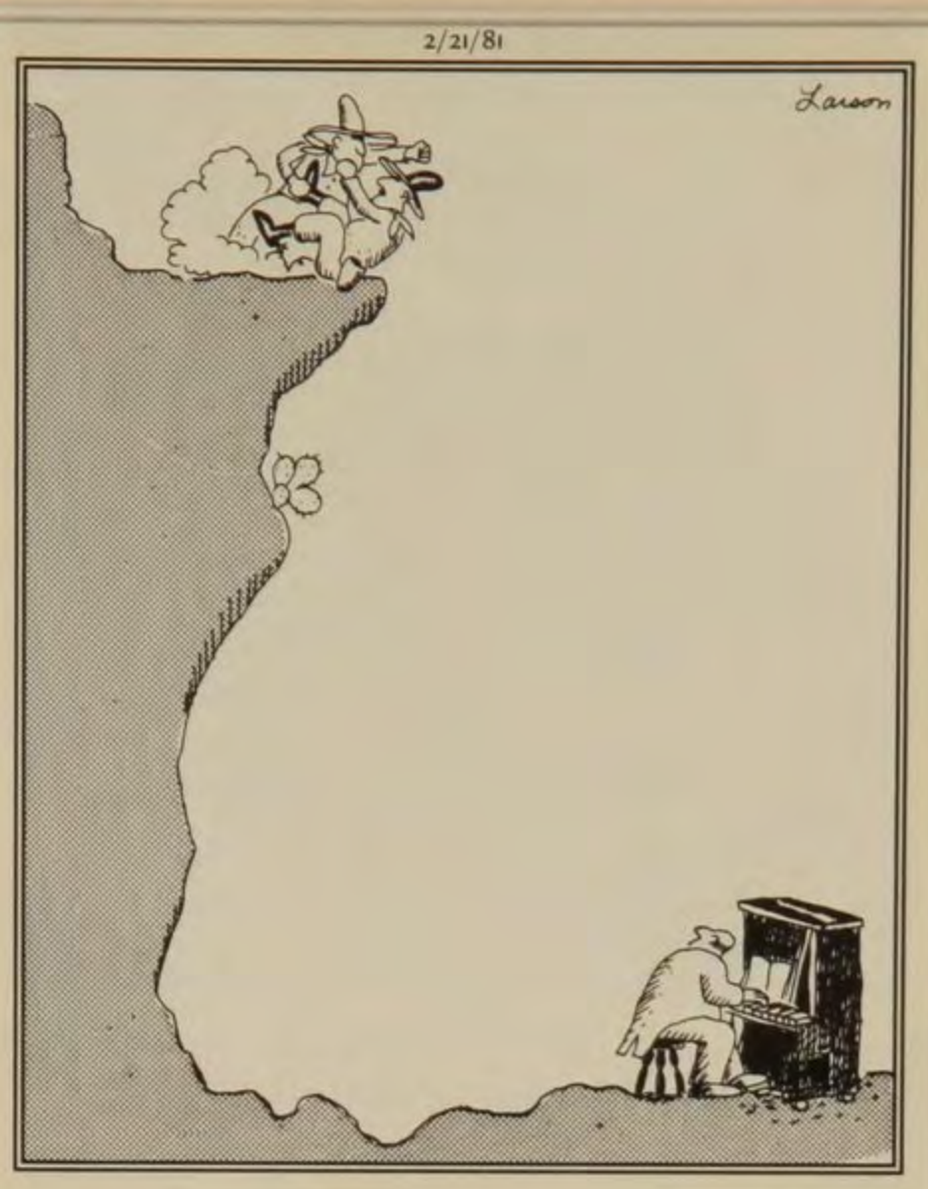
2/18/81

2/19/81



February 1981

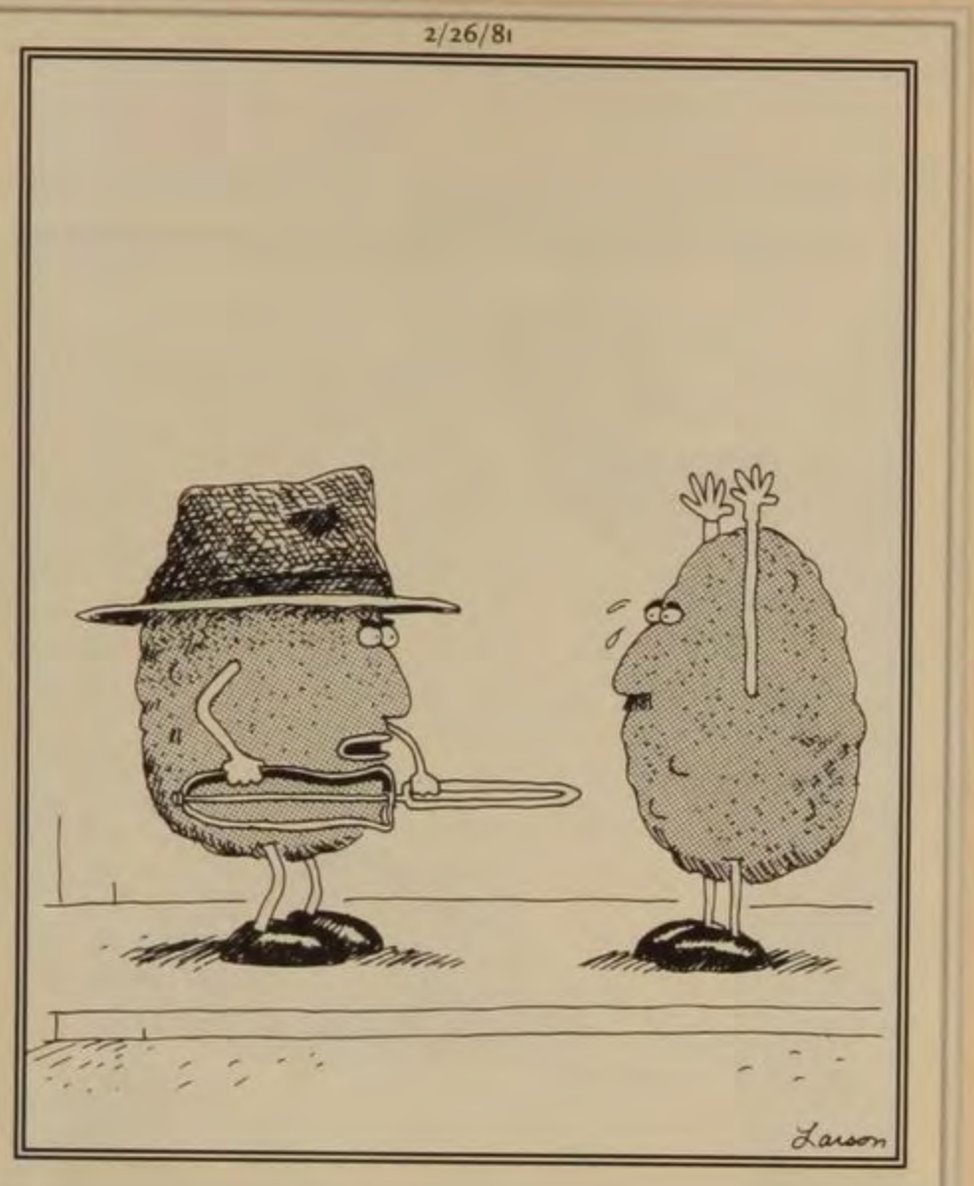




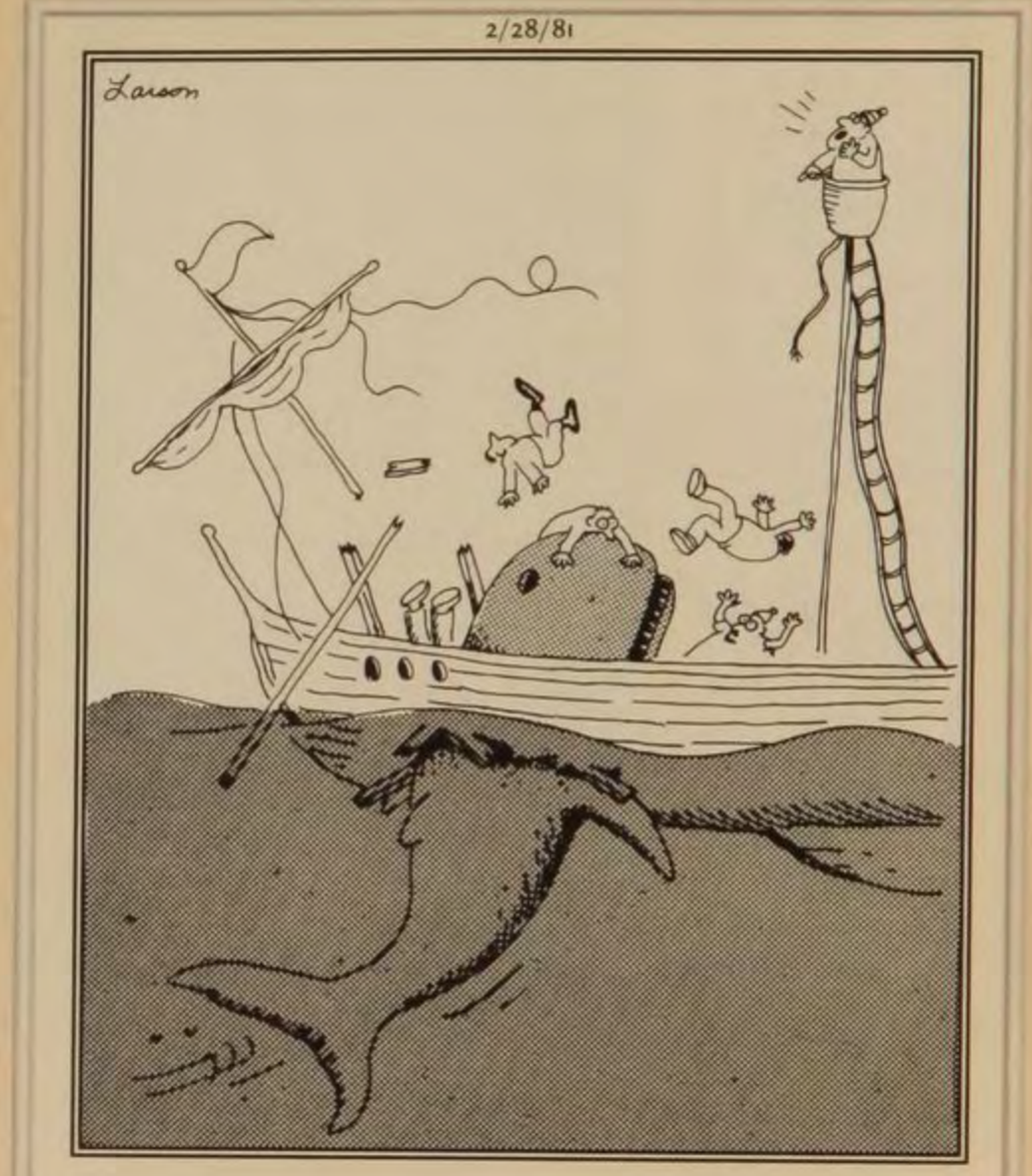
"Okay, Bob! Go! Go!"

"Oh! Here he comes. ... Now, whatever you do, don't say anything about his ears."

February 1981



"Get 'em up there!"



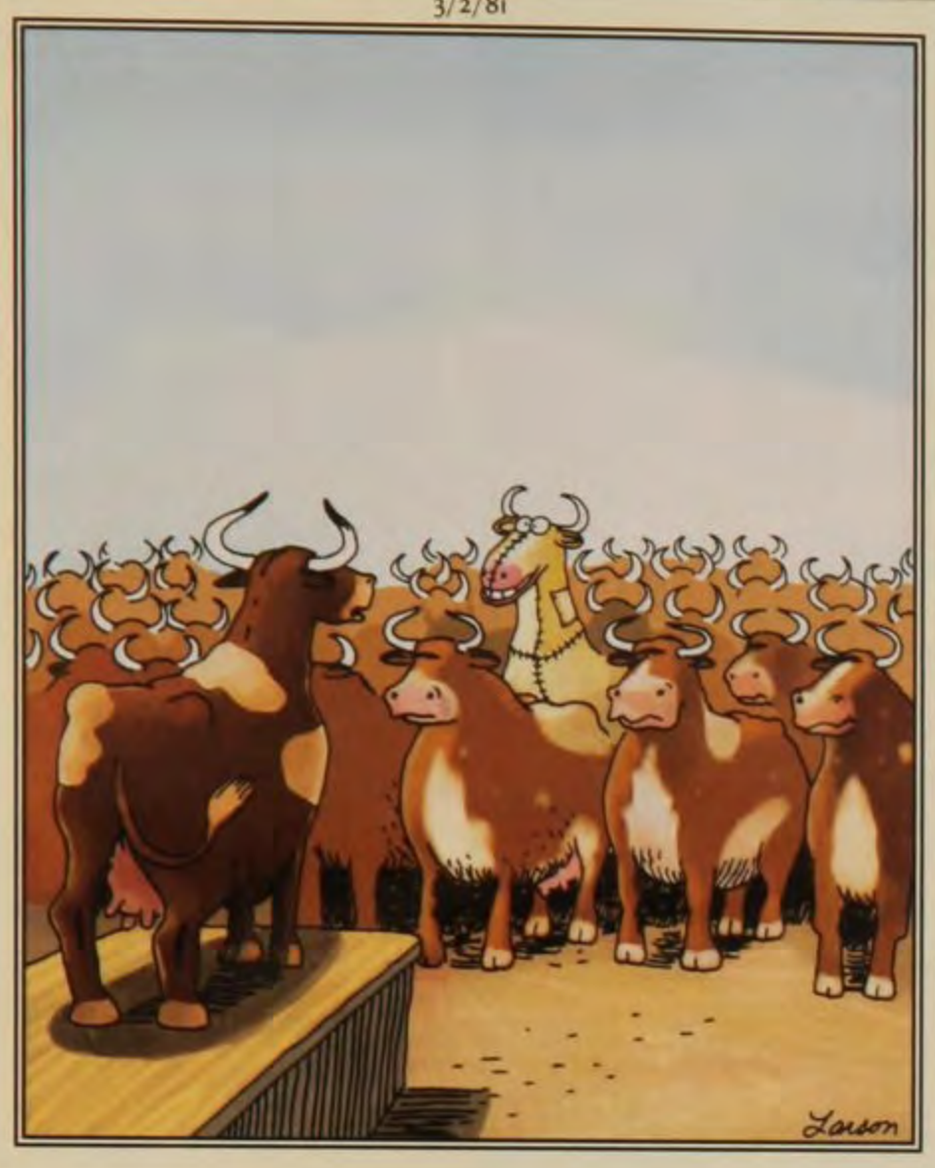
"THAAAAAAR SHE BLOOOOOOWS!"

"And I'm not going to tell you again—
clean up your room!"

"We're here, Eric! Antarctica! ...
Bottom of the world!"

March 1981

3/2/81



"The revolution has been postponed. ...
We've discovered a leak."

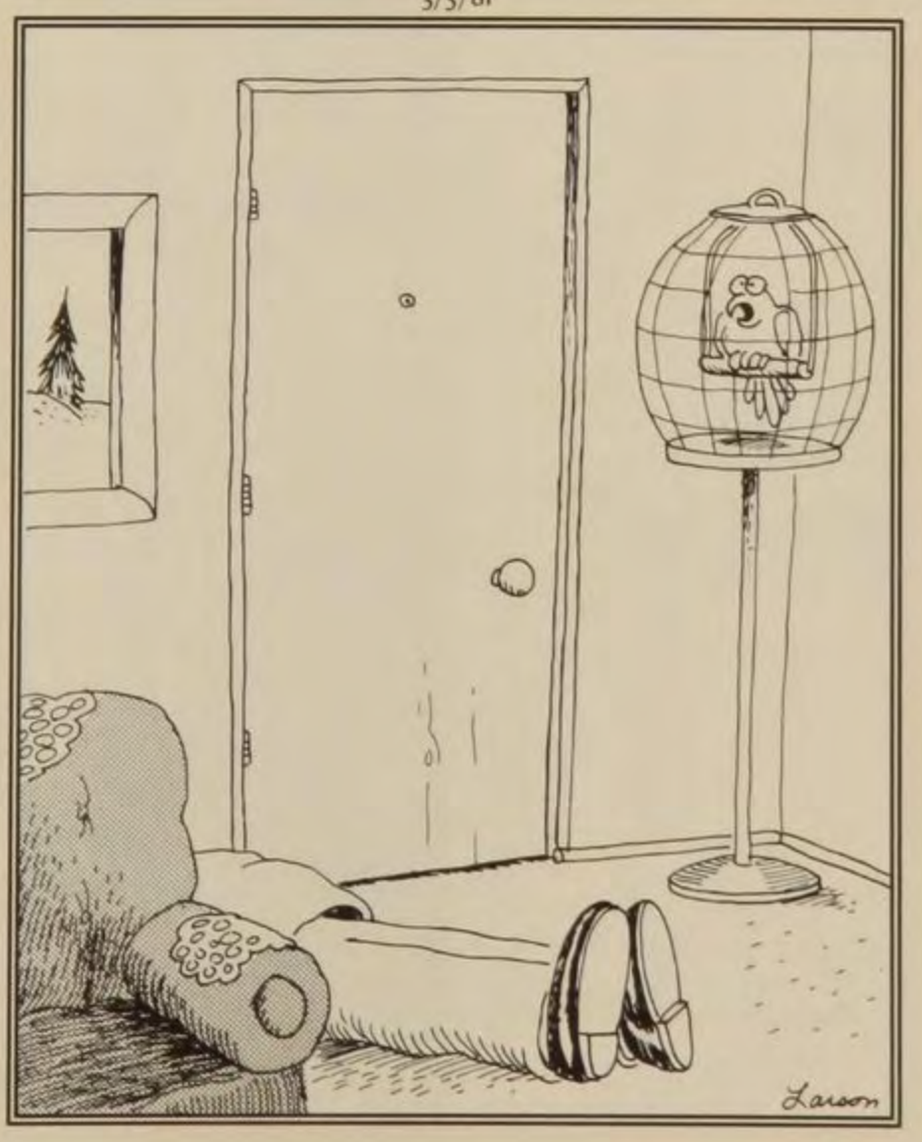
3/3/81

"Oh no! An albatross! ... Well, there
goes our luck."

3/4/81

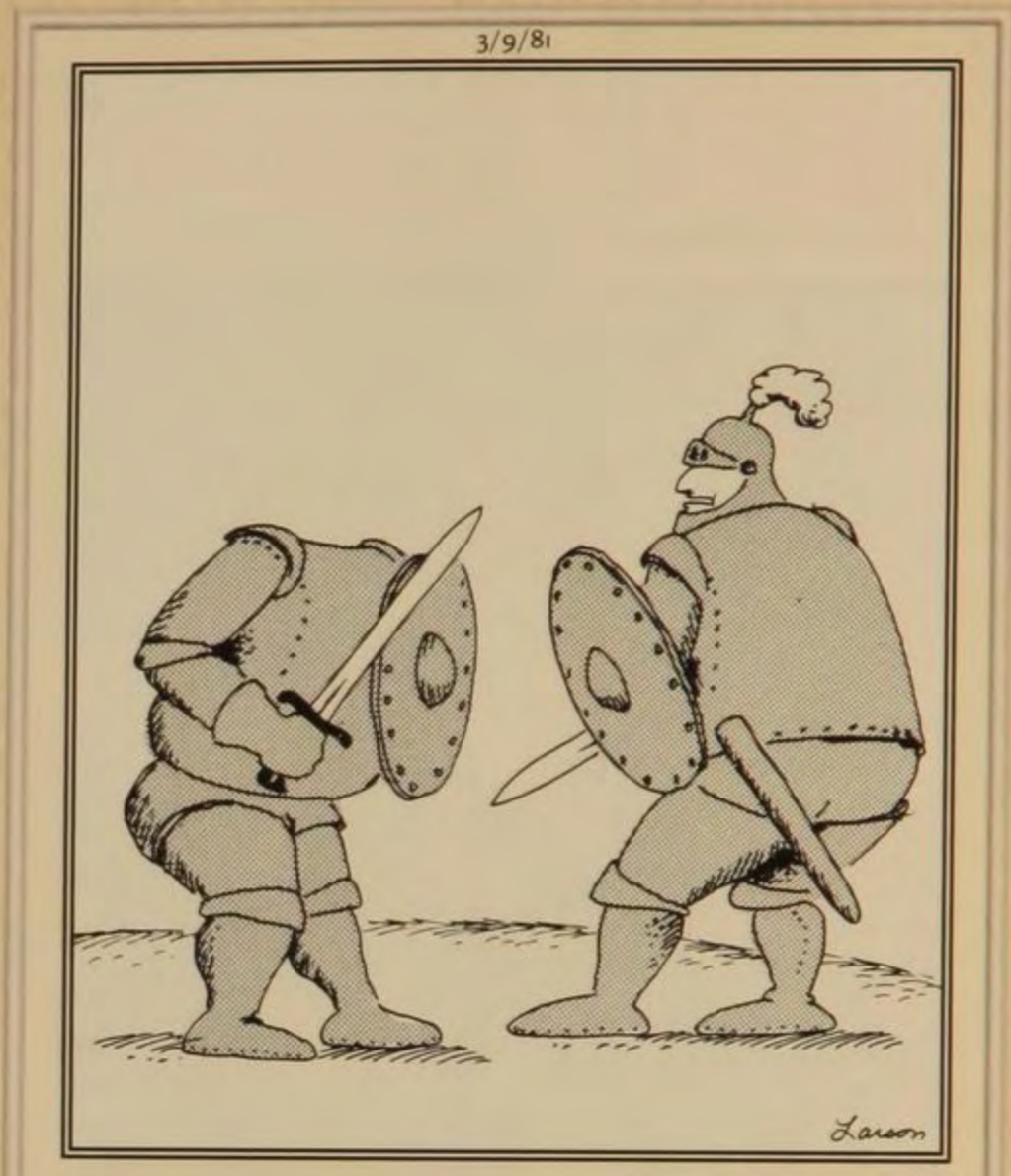
"Quick, Agnes! Look! ... There it is again!"

3/5/81

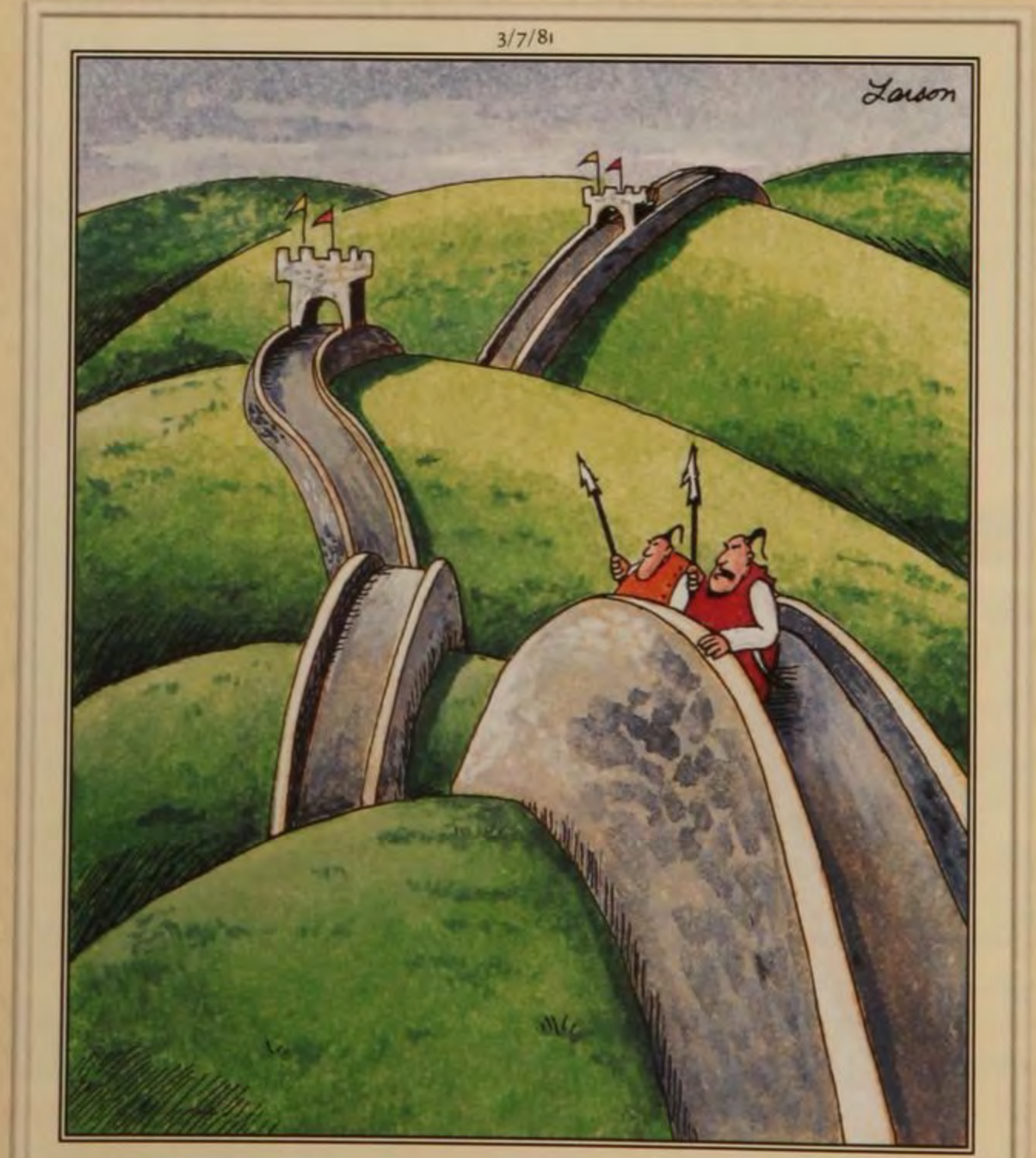


"Knock, knock, knock ... ding-dong,
ding-dong ... anybody home? ...
knock, knock, knock ... "

March 1981



"Give up, Sir James. ... You've lost."



"*Now* we'll see if that dog can get in here!"

March 1981

3/10/81

"Eraser fight!!"

3/11/81

"And now for today's lesson. ... You've probably been wondering what *these* are for."

3/12/81

"Listen—if you think you got it rough, you should try *my* child-support payments."

March 1981

"You should have thought of that earlier, Cornelius. ... You're just going to have to hold it until nightfall."

"Well, that's the last of 'em ... but just look at this place!"

March 1981

3/18/81

"This may be hard, son, but your mother and I agreed it was time you were told the truth. ... You were adopted."

3/19/81

"Andrew! Listen! ... You can hear the ocean!"

3/20/81

"Hang on, Bernard! You've got him! ... Give him slack!"

3/21/81

March 1981

"Hey, Bob! So how's death been treating you?"

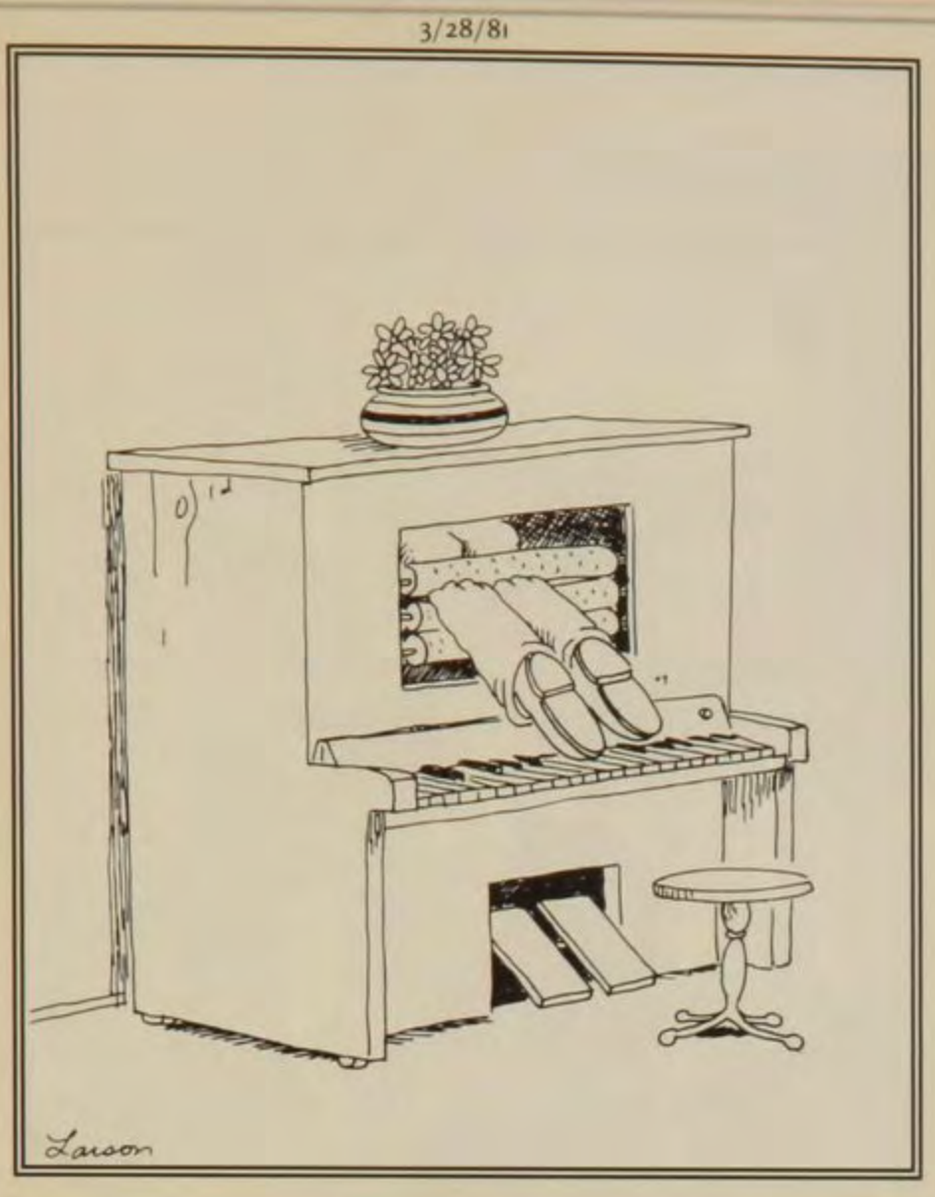
"FOOD!"

"So then Carl says to me, 'Look—let's invite over the new neighbors and check 'em out.'"

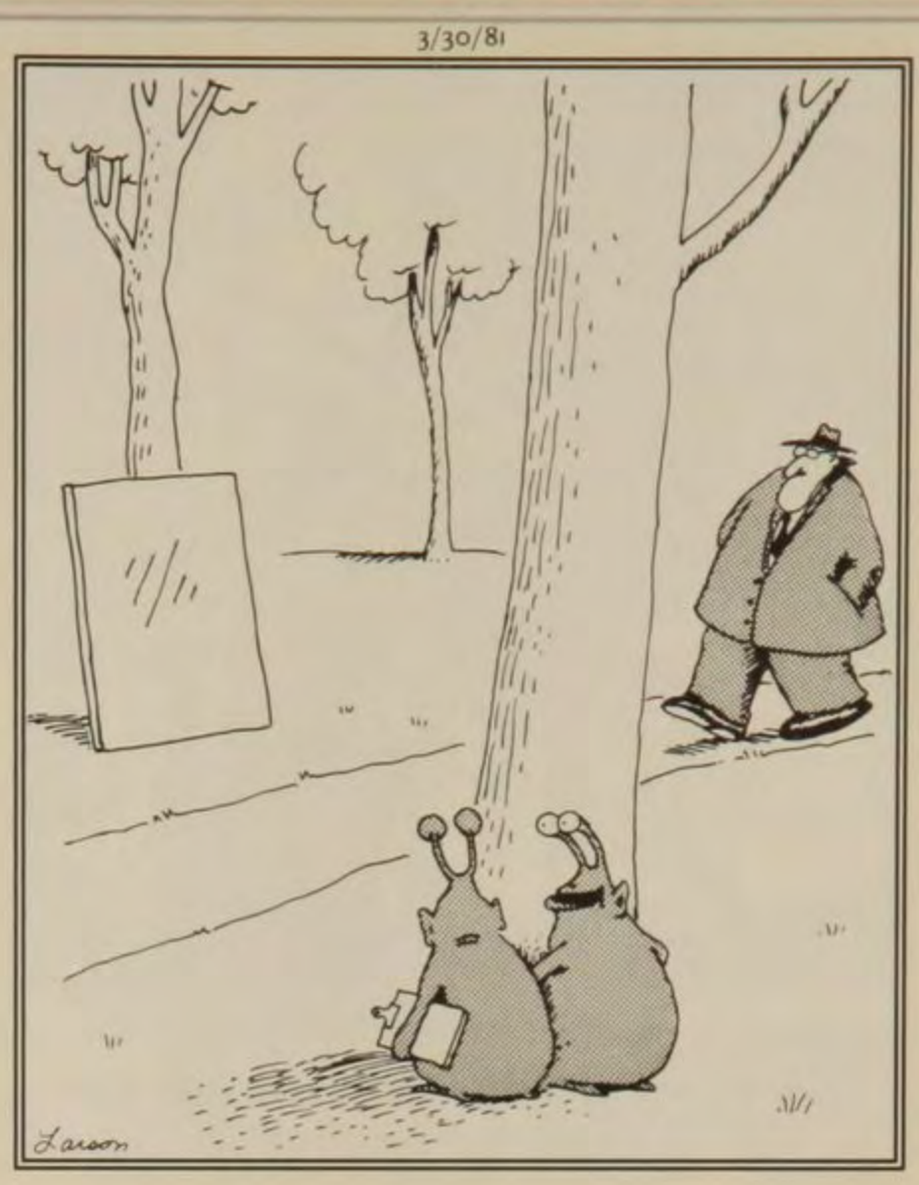
"Okay, Billy. ... Tide's coming in now. ... Dig me out, Billy. ... Billy, I don't want to get angry. ..."

March 1981

3/28/81



3/30/81

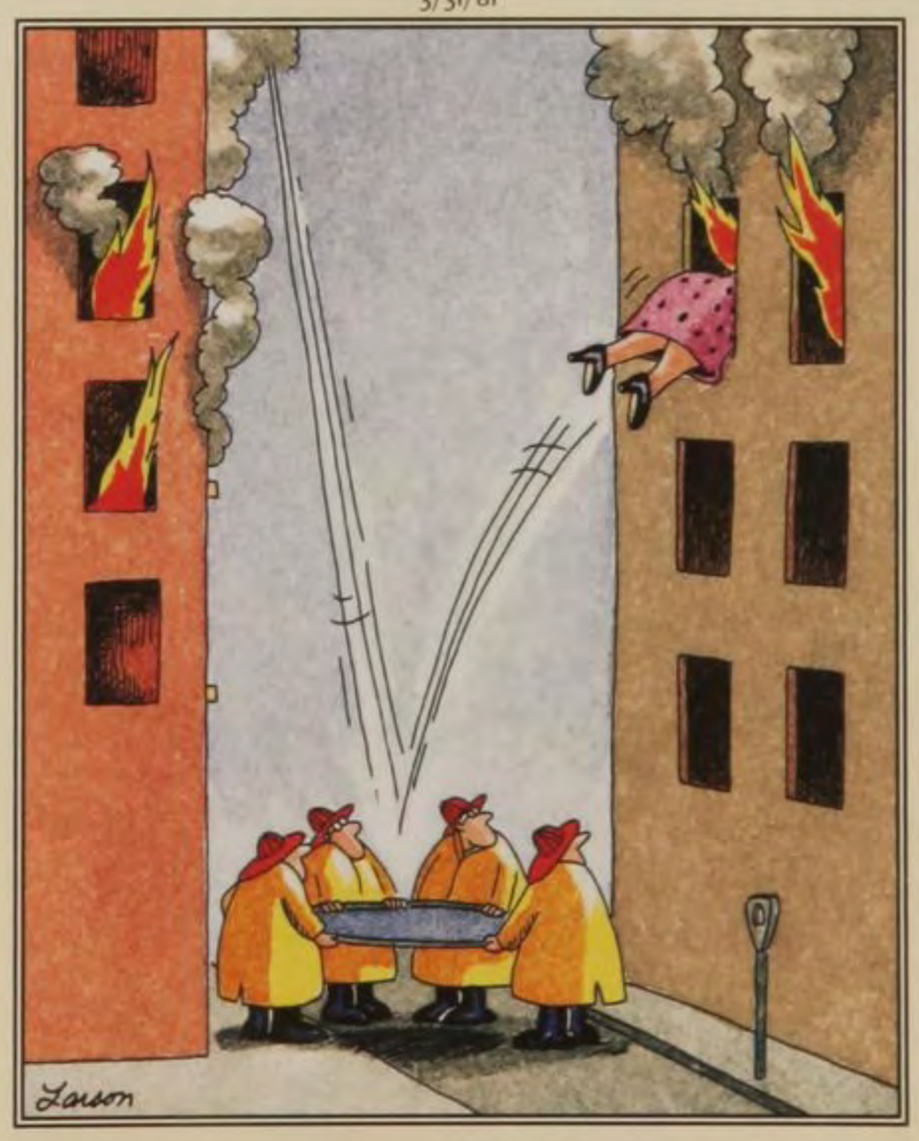


"And now we'll see if it attacks its own reflection."

3/25/81

"You heard me, Simmons! You get that cursed bugle fixed!"

3/31/81

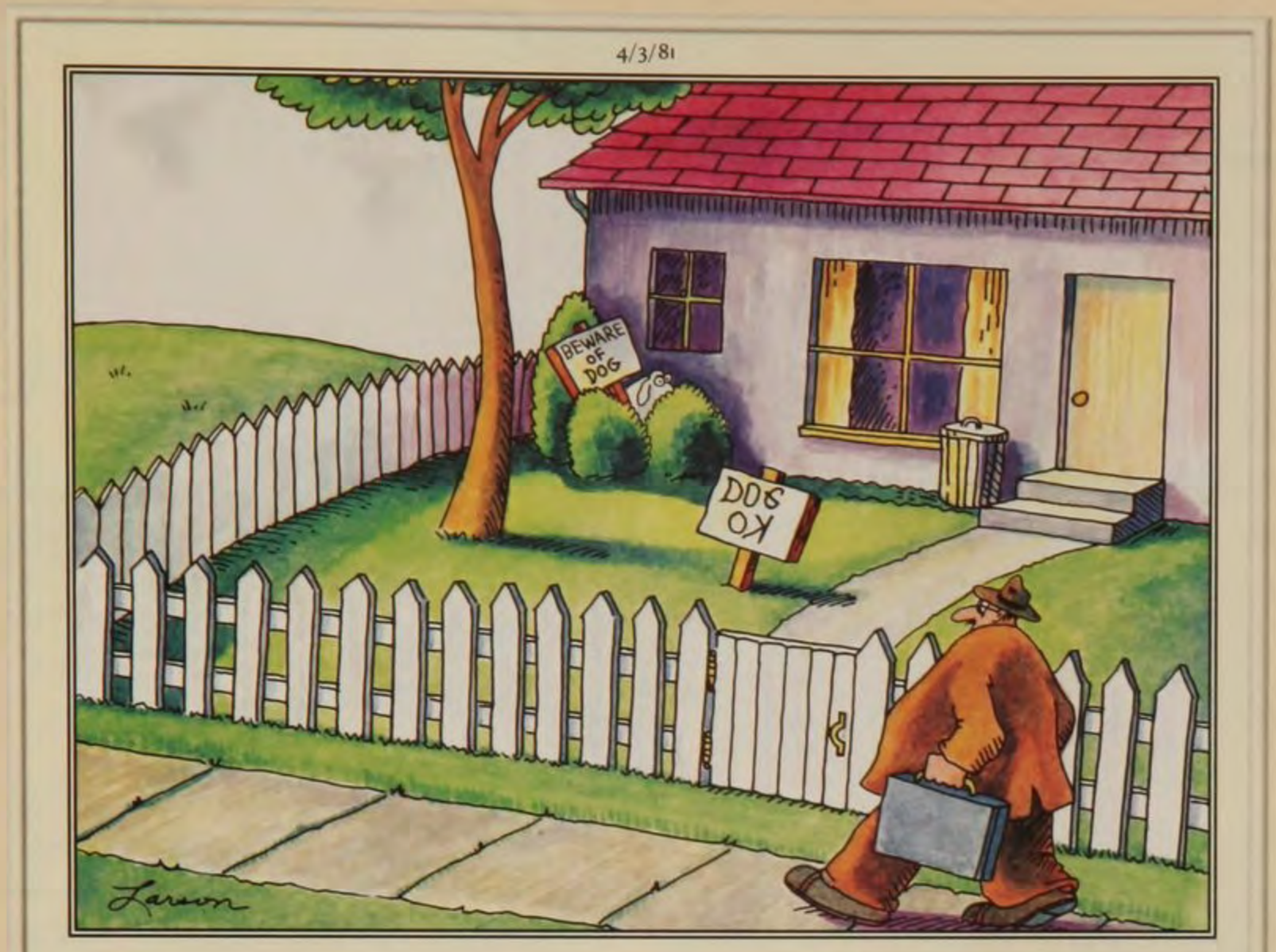


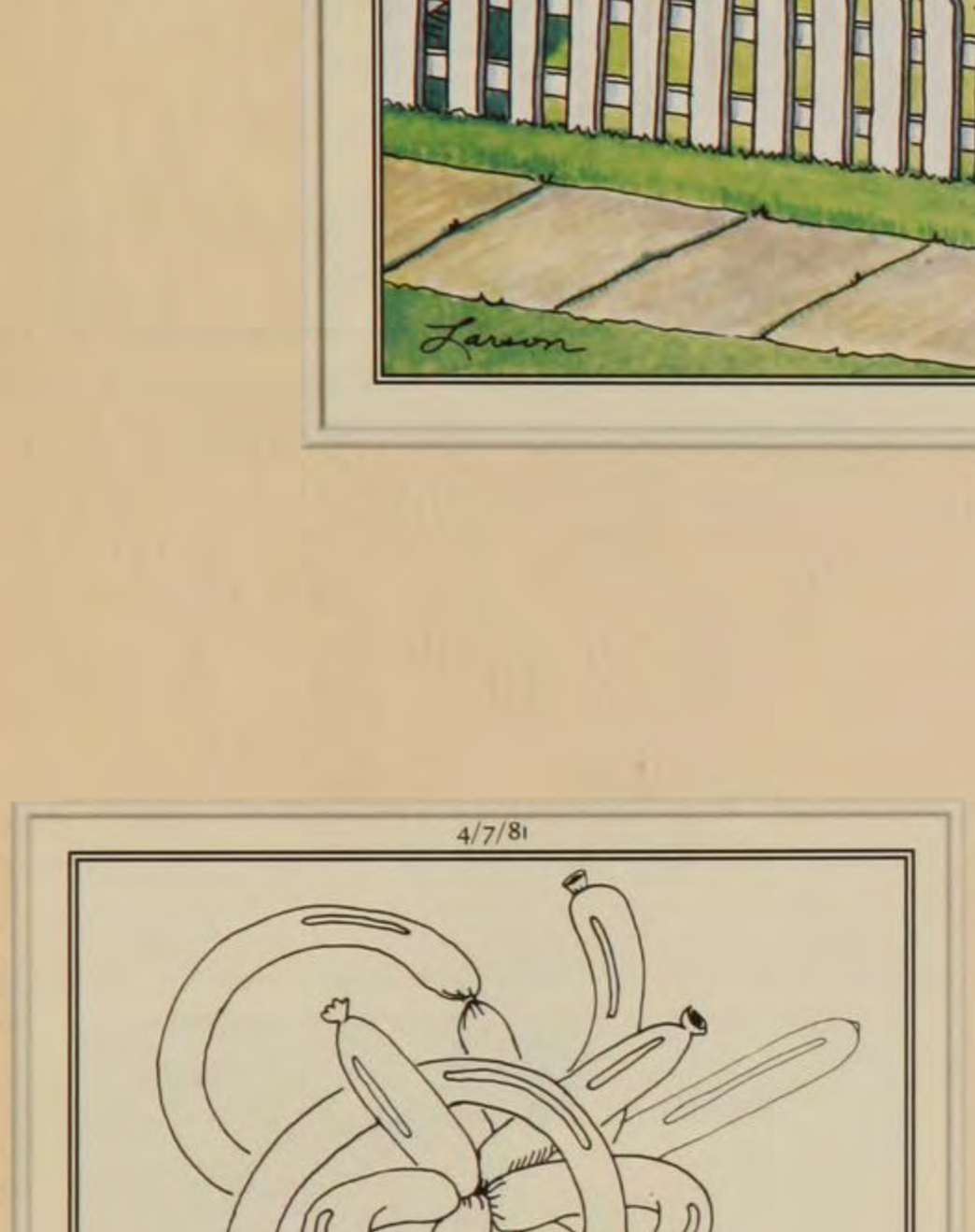
April 1981

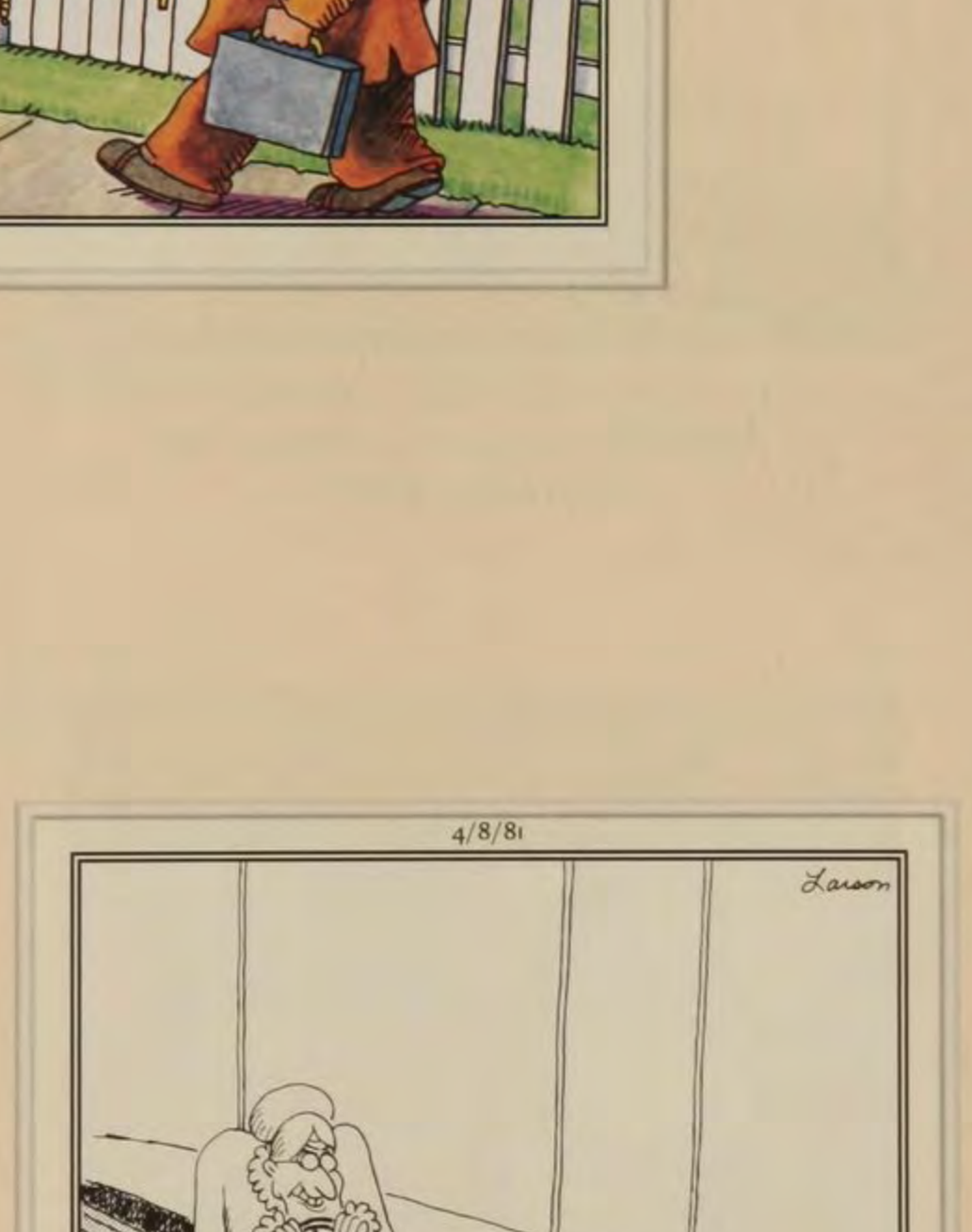
"Curse you, Zog! I've told you a hundred times to get them screens up!"

"Of course, that was back in the days when you were just a twinkle in your father's eyes."

April 1981







"Watch it, Randy! ... She's on your case!"

April 1981

"There they go again ... leaving the nest too early."

"Seven days at sea ... but thank God no one's seen us yet."

"Of course, living in an all-glass house has its disadvantages ... but you should see the birds smack it."

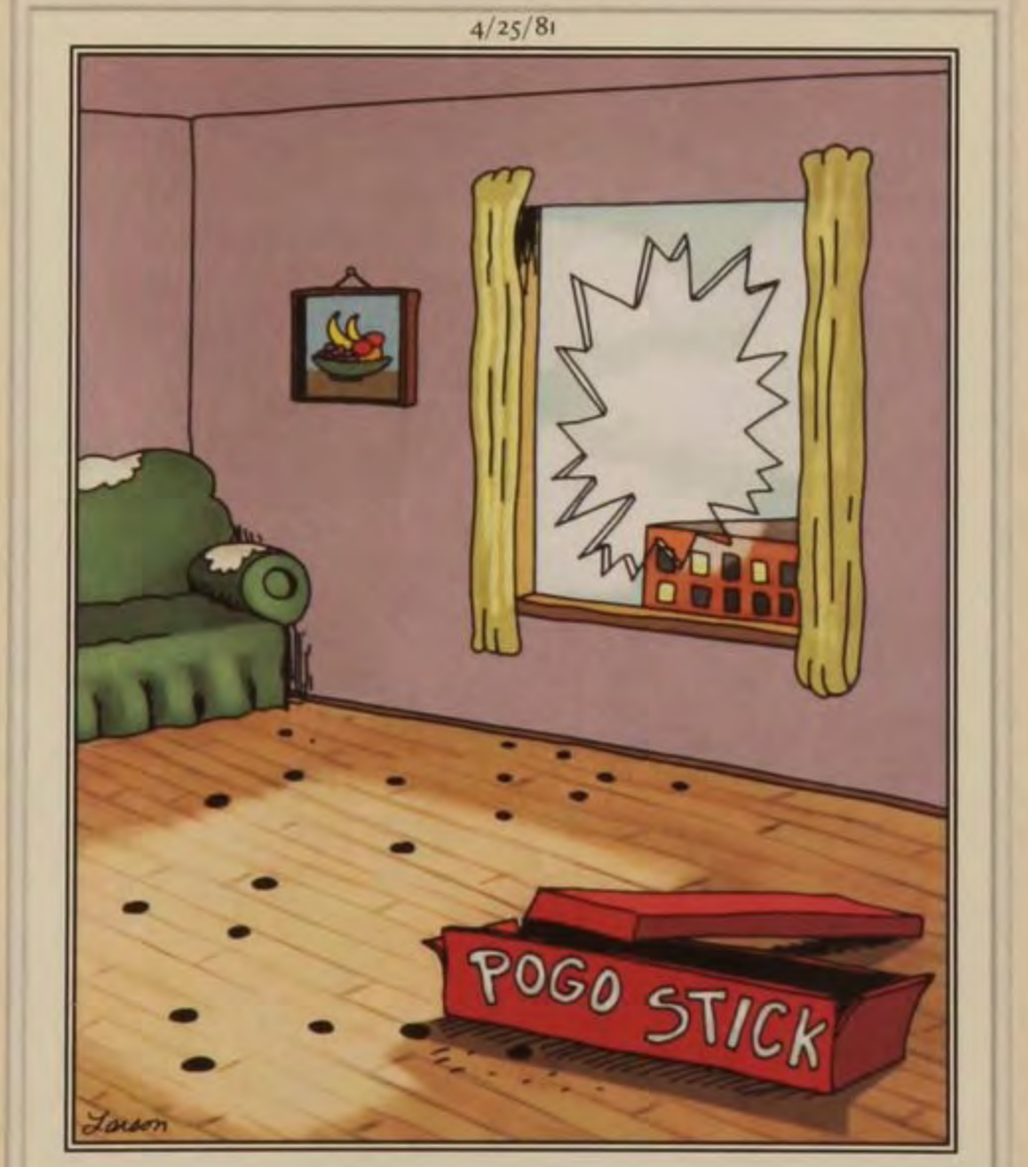
"Go get 'em, brother."

April 1981

"No! No! Not that! Not *the pit!*"

"Uh-oh, Warren. ... The Williamses are checking us out again."

"This is a test. For the next thirty seconds, this station will conduct a test of the emergency broadcast system ..."

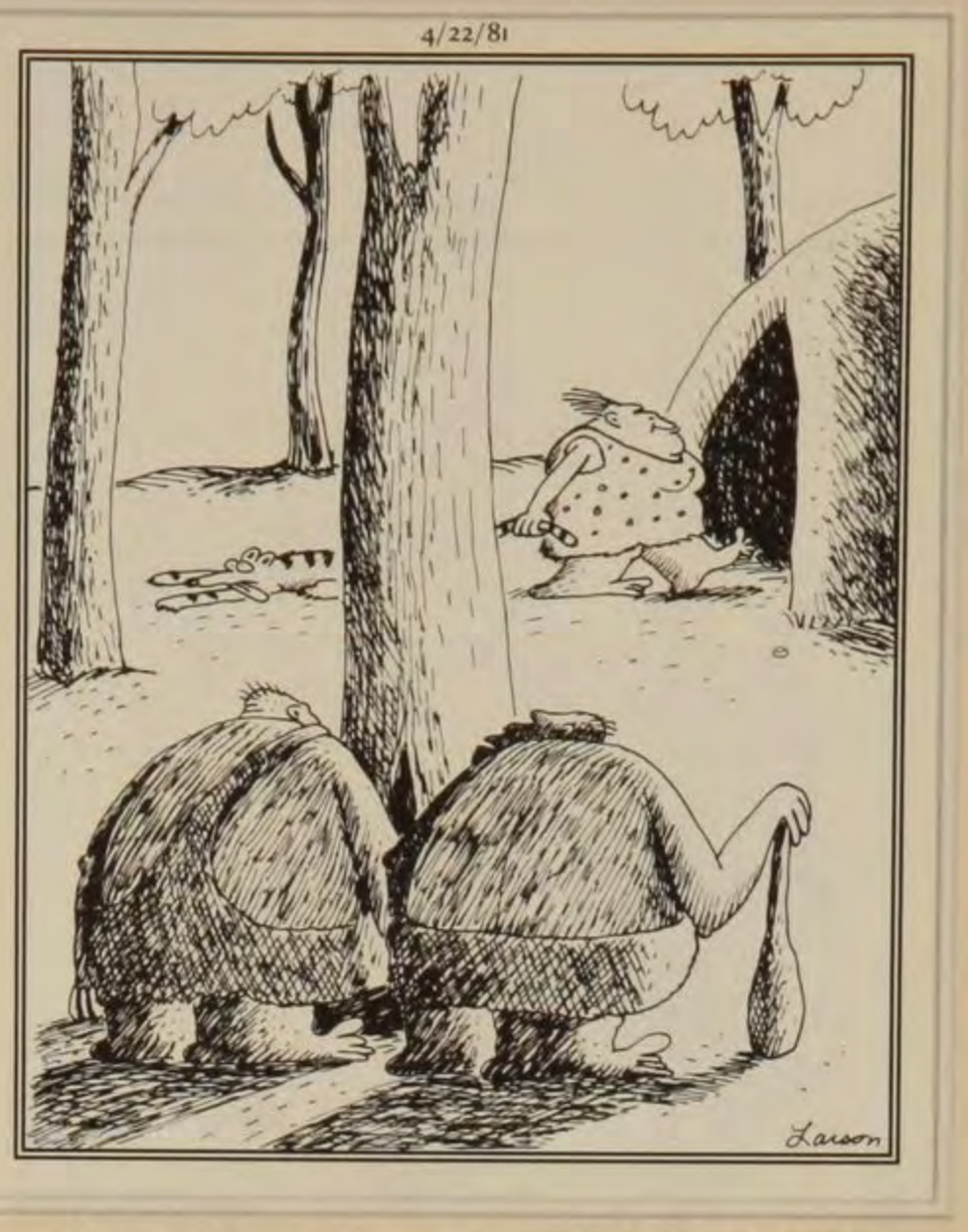


April 1981

"Well, I guess that explains the abdominal pains."

April 1981

"Now, close your eyes and go back to sleep, honey. ... There's nothing in your closet."



"Remember, Thag, approach her carefully. If she doesn't recognize your courtship behavior, she might eat you."

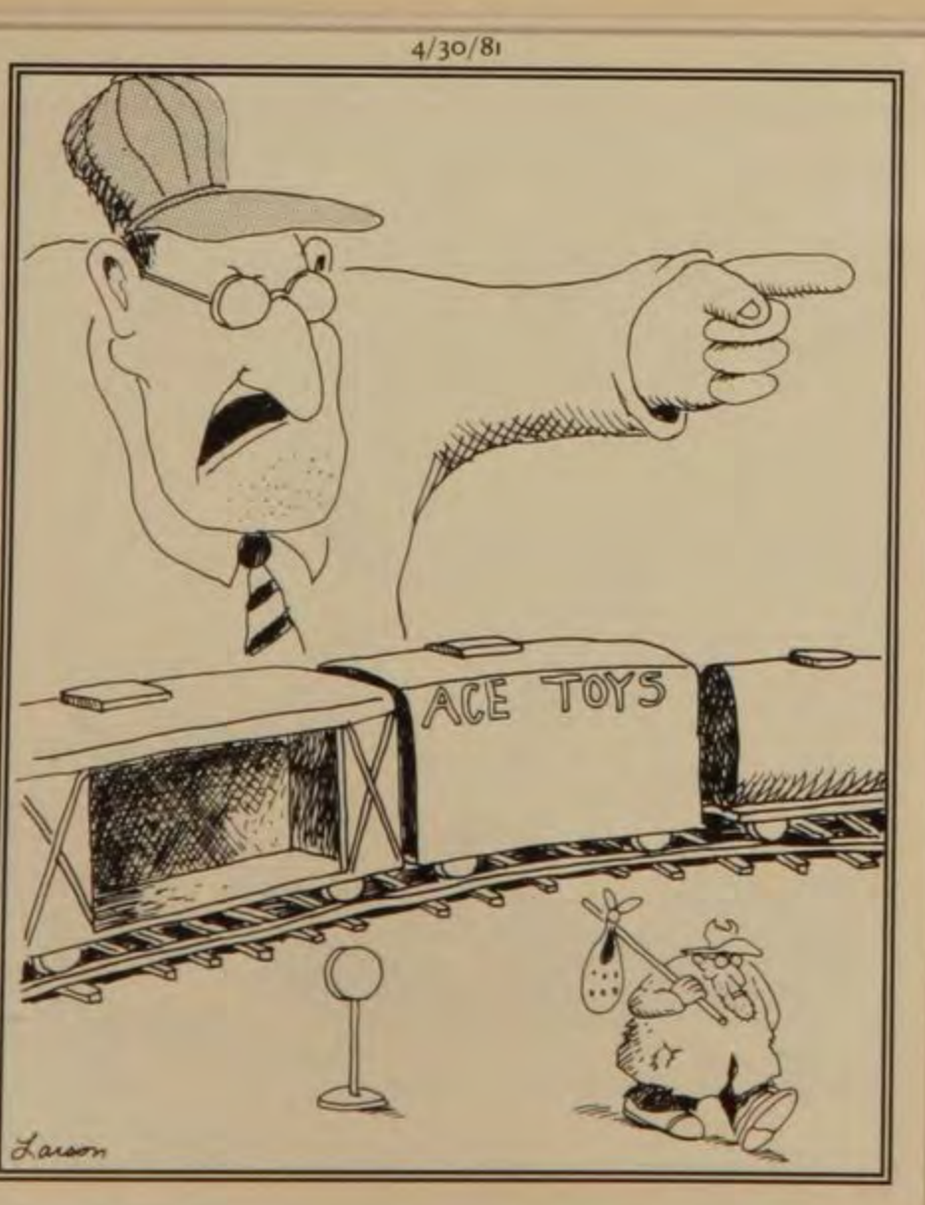
"So there he was—this big gorilla just lying there. And Jim here says, 'Do you suppose it's dead or just asleep?'"

"Ahhhh ... life!"

April 1981

"Florence! It's my neck again! ...
I can't move it!"

"And you should definitely stay away from
short blondes and tall buildings."



"And *stay* off!"

4-30-81

Editor
Los Angeles Times
Times Mirror Square
Los Angeles, CA

Sirs:

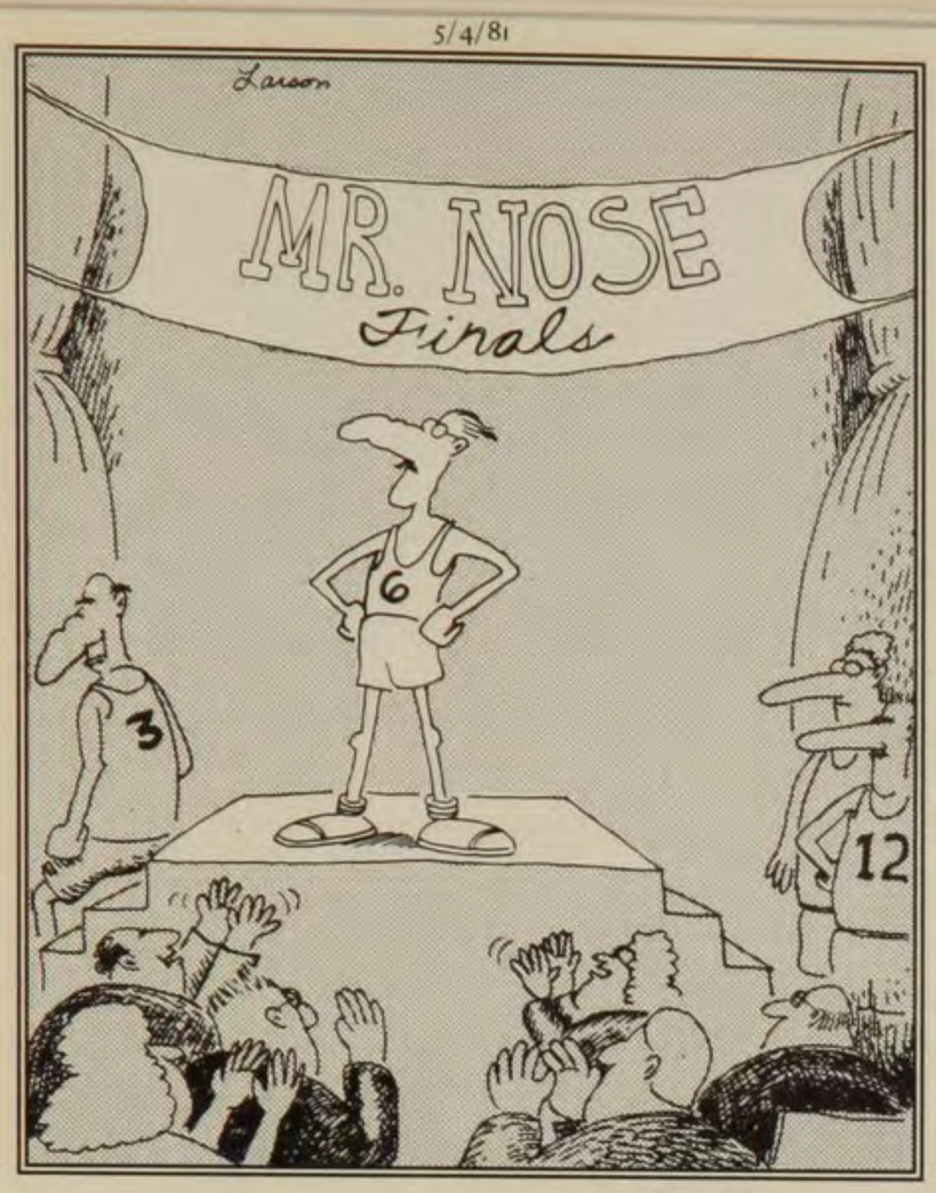
I must register strong exception to your cartoon "The Far Side" by Gary Larson in today's paper.

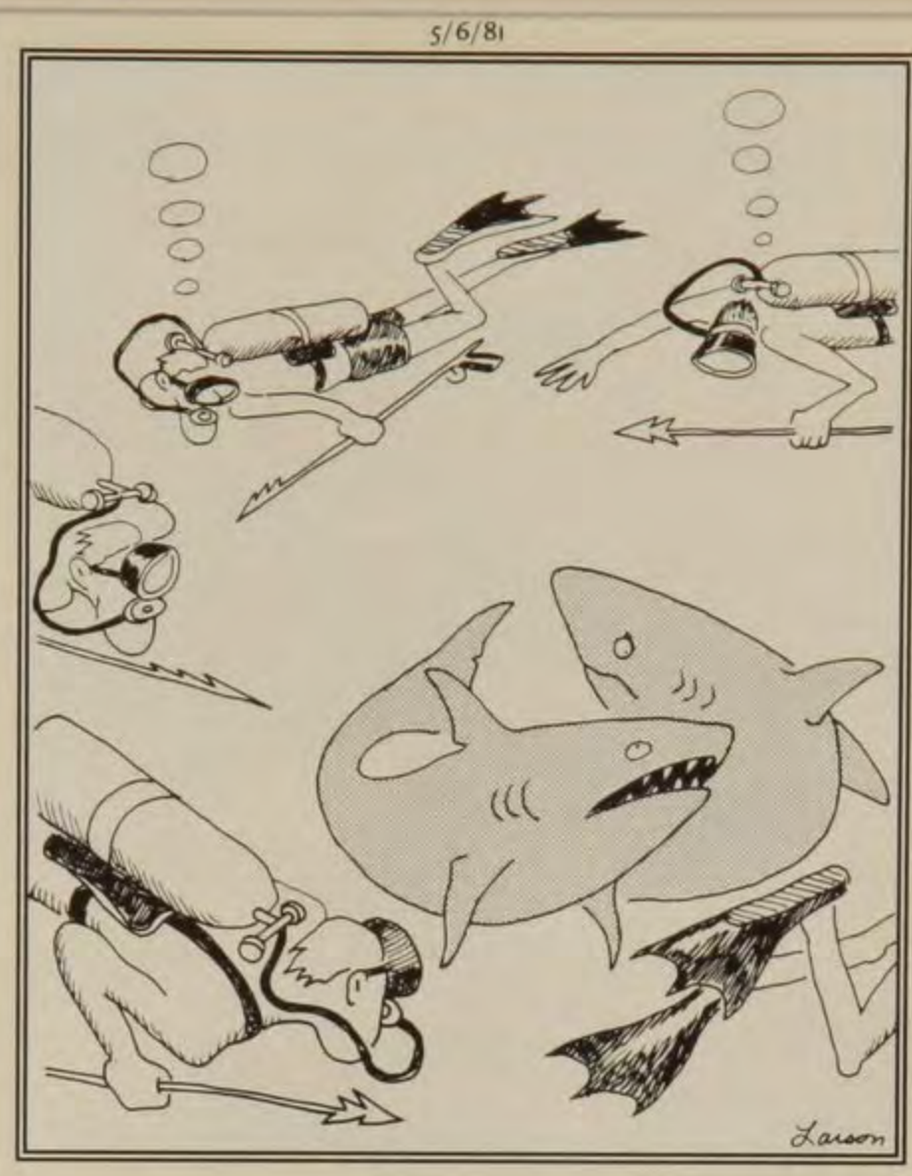
Being an old railroader and model railroad fan for longer than I care to admit I must inform you and Gary Larson that no model railroader in his right mind would force a perfectly sculptured "bum" from his railroad "layout".

A model railroader seeks perfection in his miniture world. A miniture creature would be welcomed as heartily as the perfect switch or a track that never gets greasy.
His only complaint would be if the "bum" was "out of scale."

HOn3 forever,
Howard Decker

May 1981





"Just stay calm and don't make any erratic movements."

The Dawn of Man

"Now follow me. Step, step, slither, step ... step, step, slither, step ..."

May 1981

5/1/81

5/2/81

5/11/81

"We better do as he says, Thag. ...
He's got the drop on us."

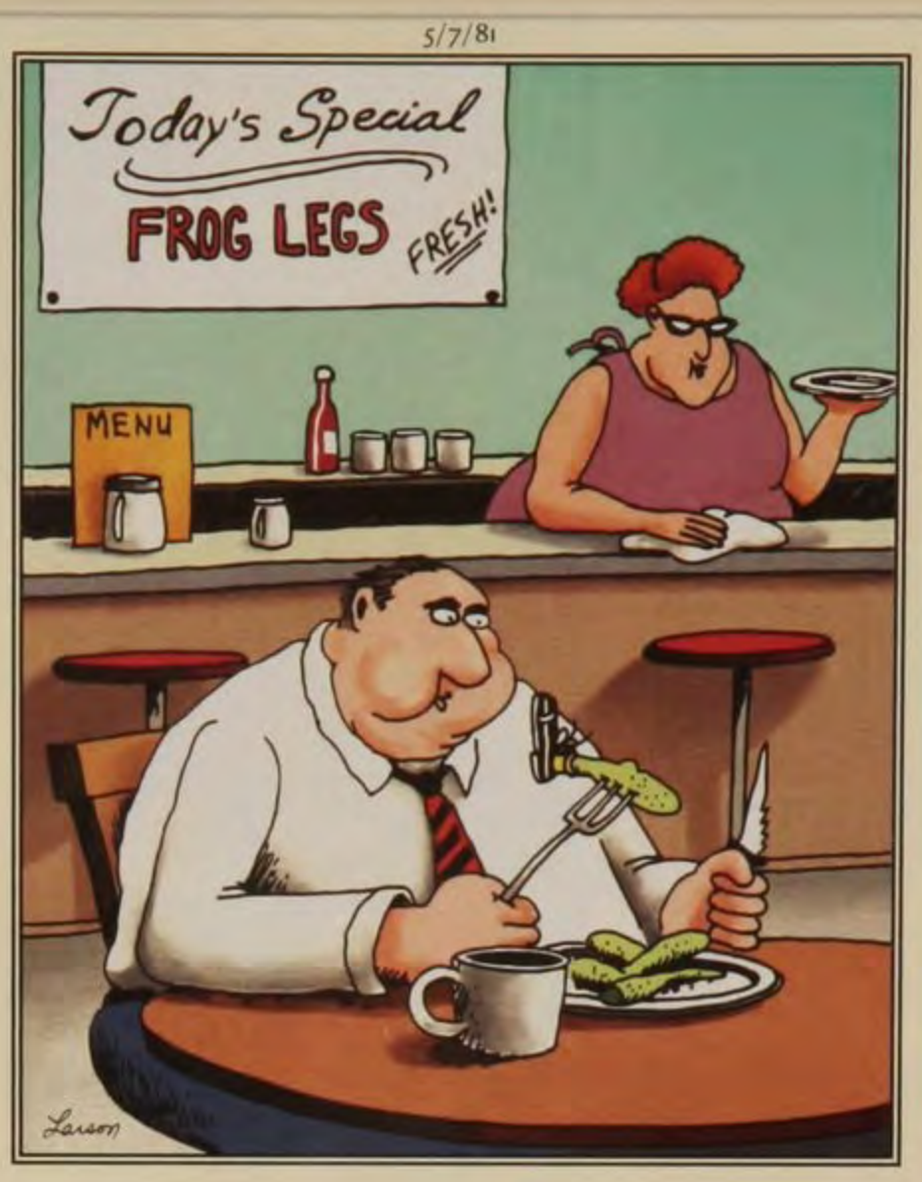
5/13/81

"Oh, yeah? ... And I suppose you got those
suction marks at the meeting, too!"

May 1981

5/5/81

5/7/81



5/12/81

"Now I remember, Helen! ... That's the old peasant woman who said she'd put a curse on me if I snapped her!"

5/19/81

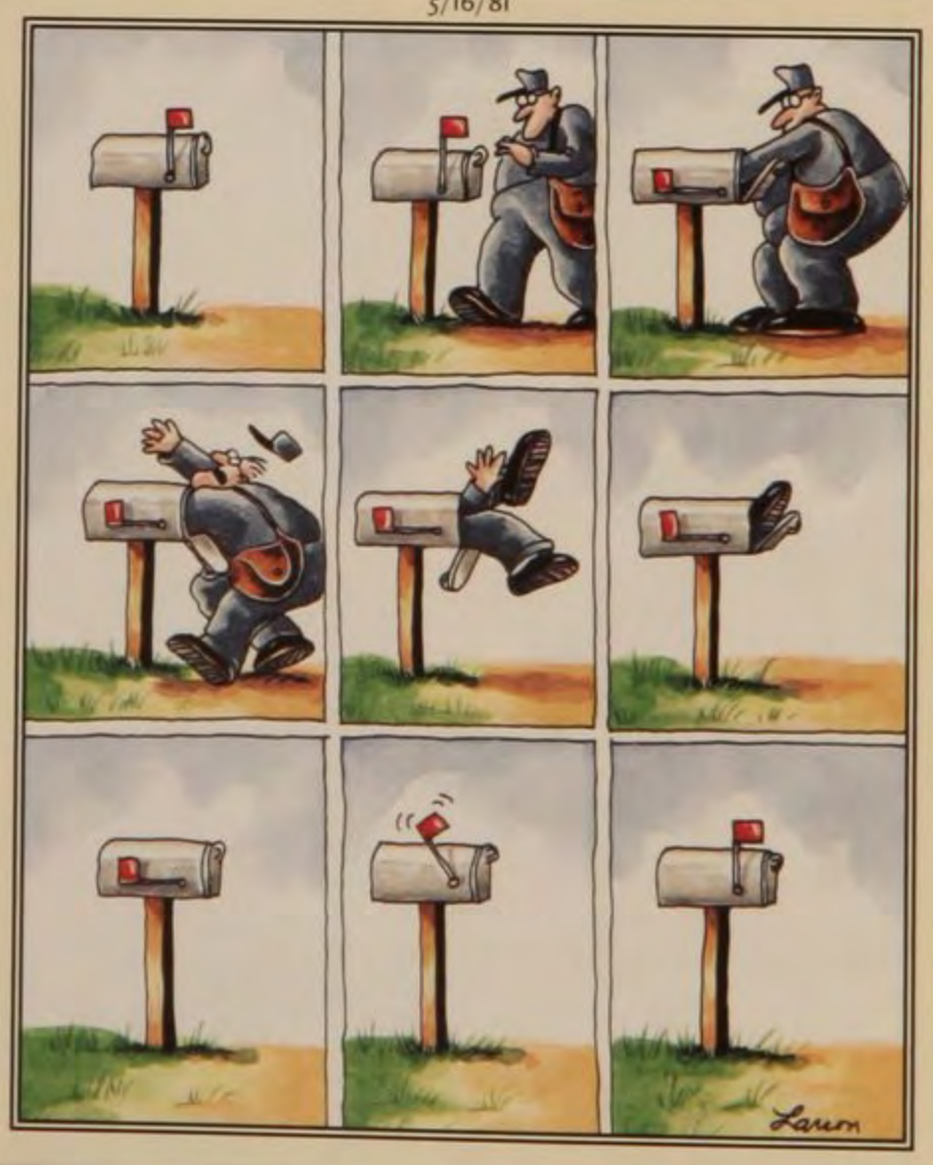
May 1981

5/15/81

"Okay, okay, okay. ... Everyone just calm down and we'll try this thing one more time."

5/14/81

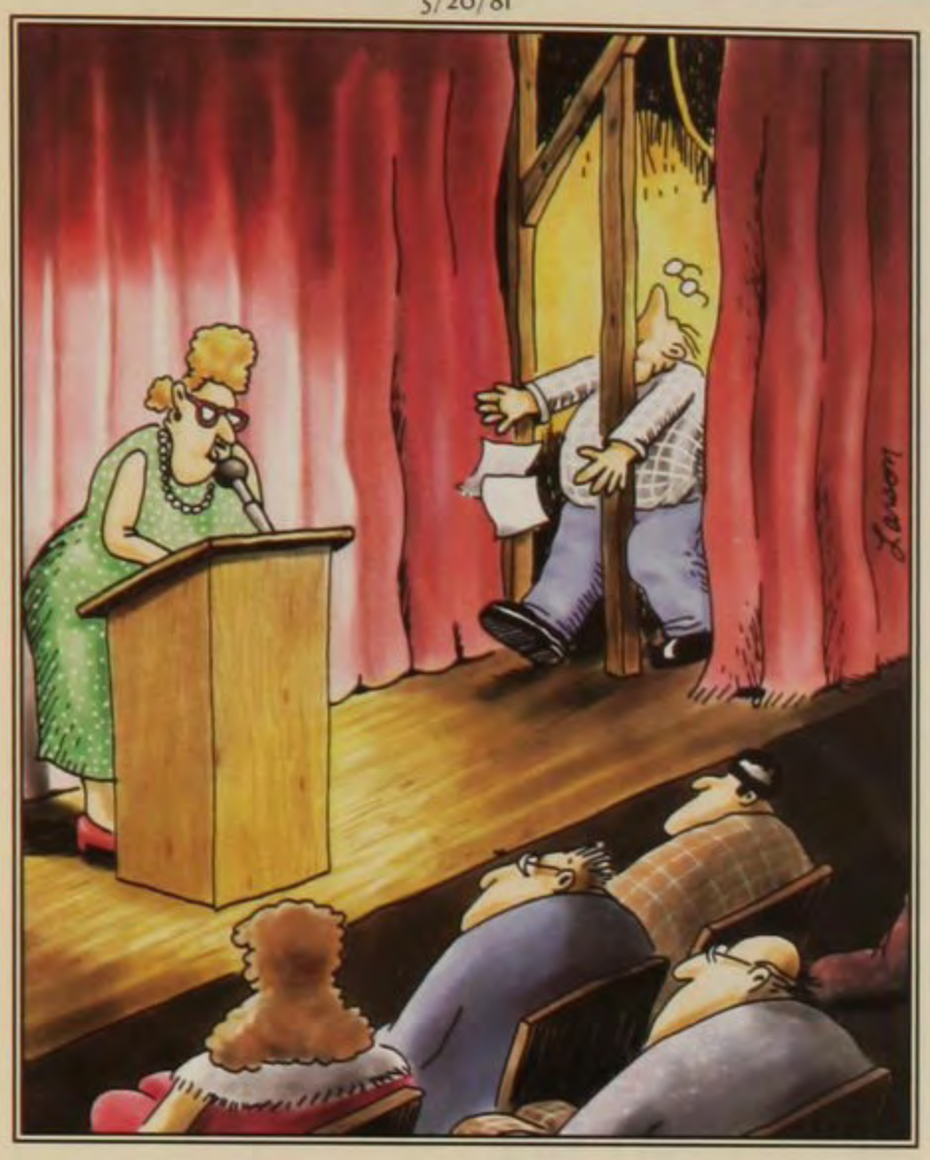
5/16/81



"This ain't gonna look good on our report, Leroy."

May 1981

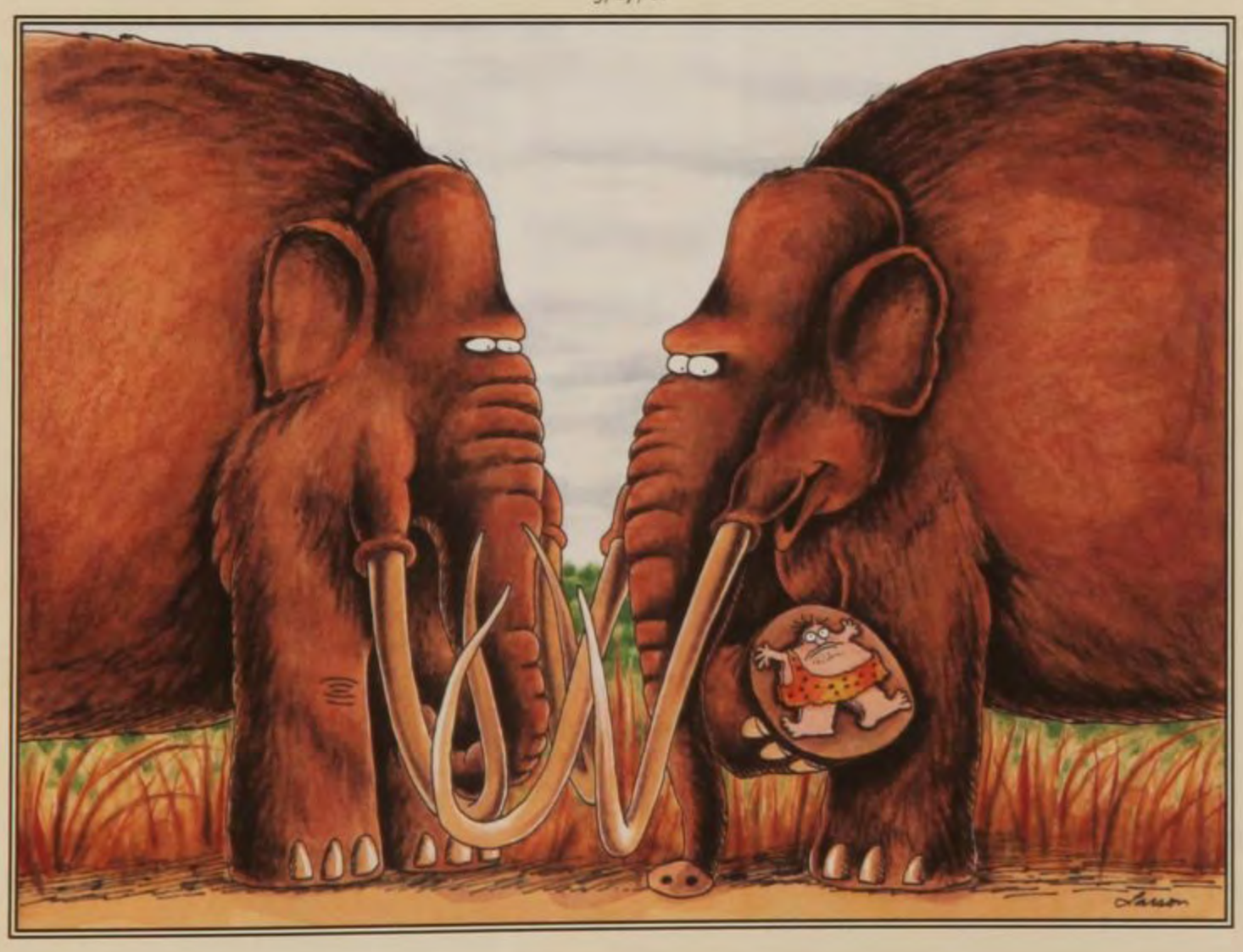
5/20/81



"And so, without further ado, here's the author of *Mind over Matter* ..."

5/23/81

5/27/81

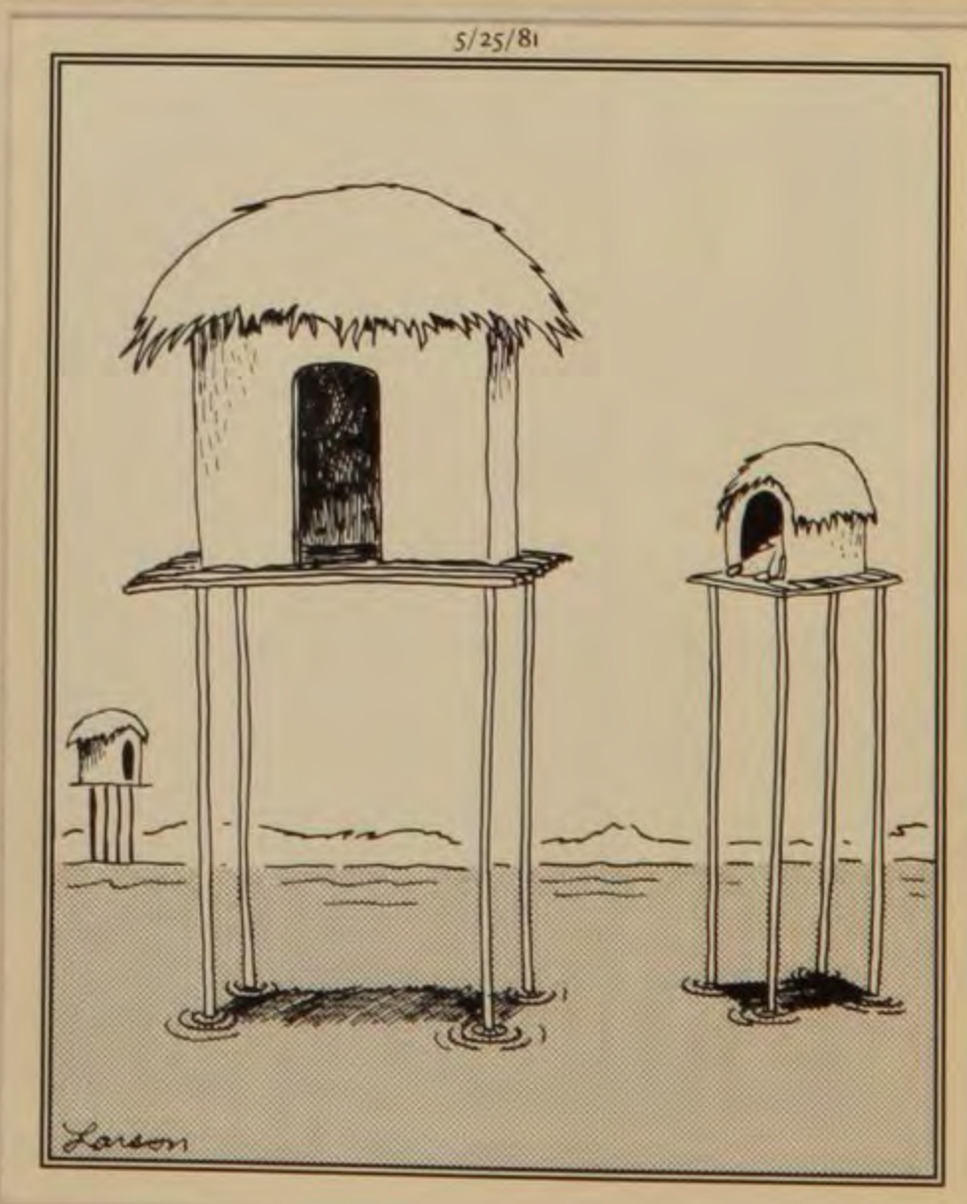


"Well, what the? ... I *thought* I smelled something."

May 1981

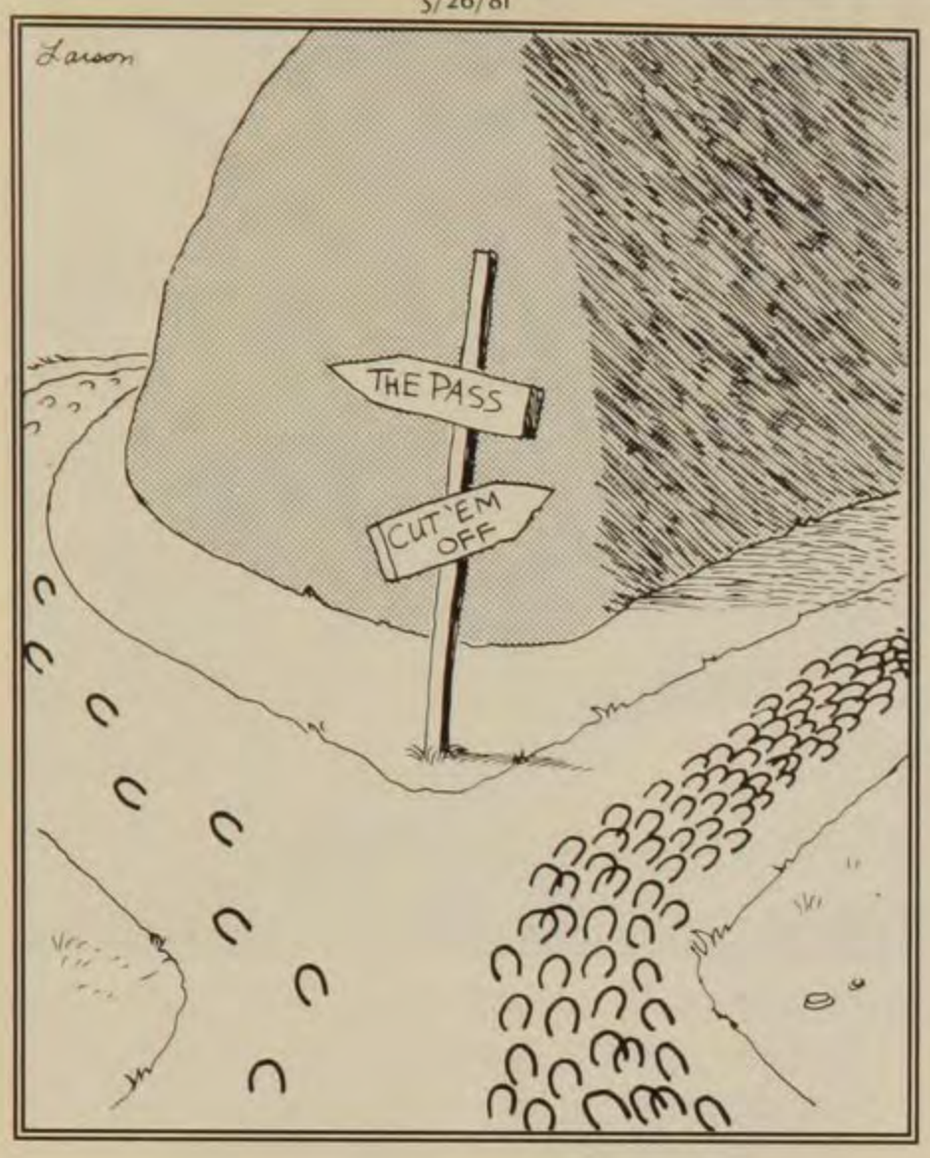
"My goodness, Harold! ... Now there goes one big mosquito!"

"Say ... wasn't there supposed to be a couple of holes punched in this thing?"

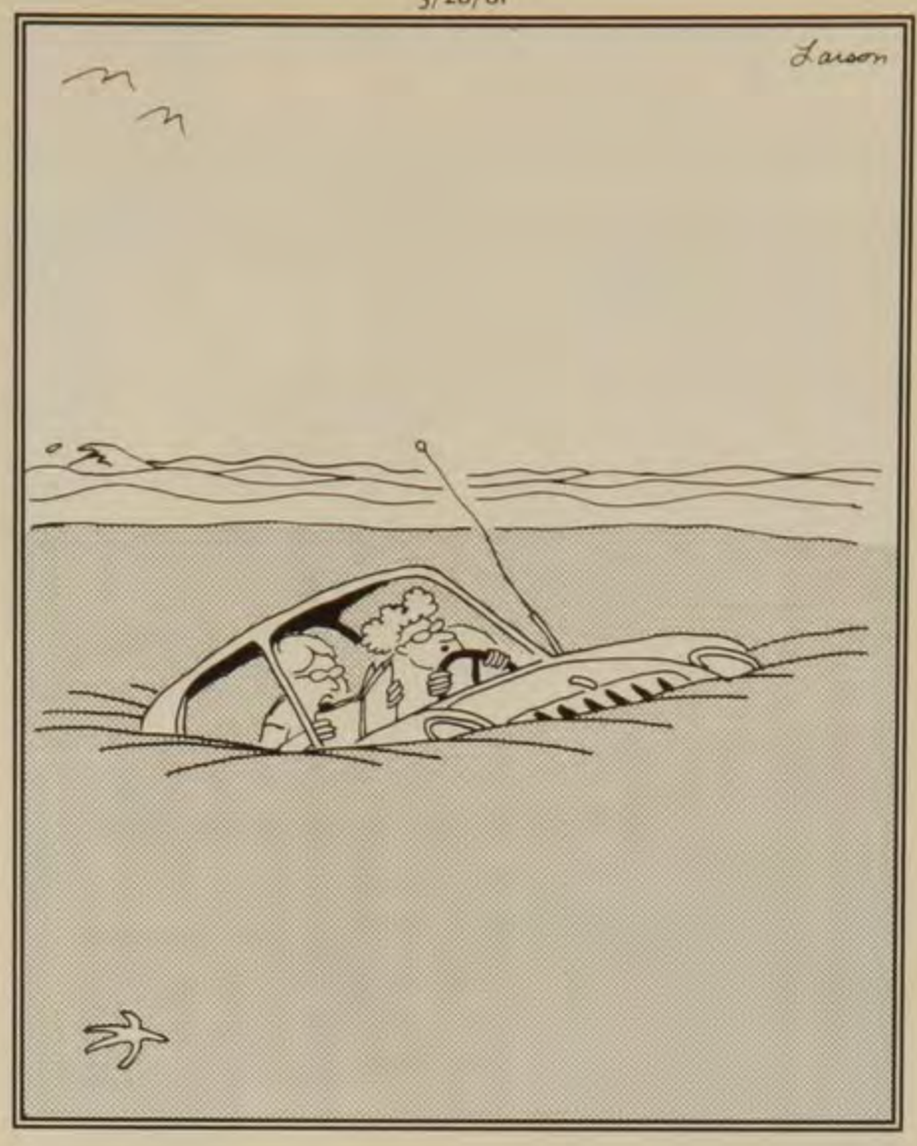


May 1981

5/26/81



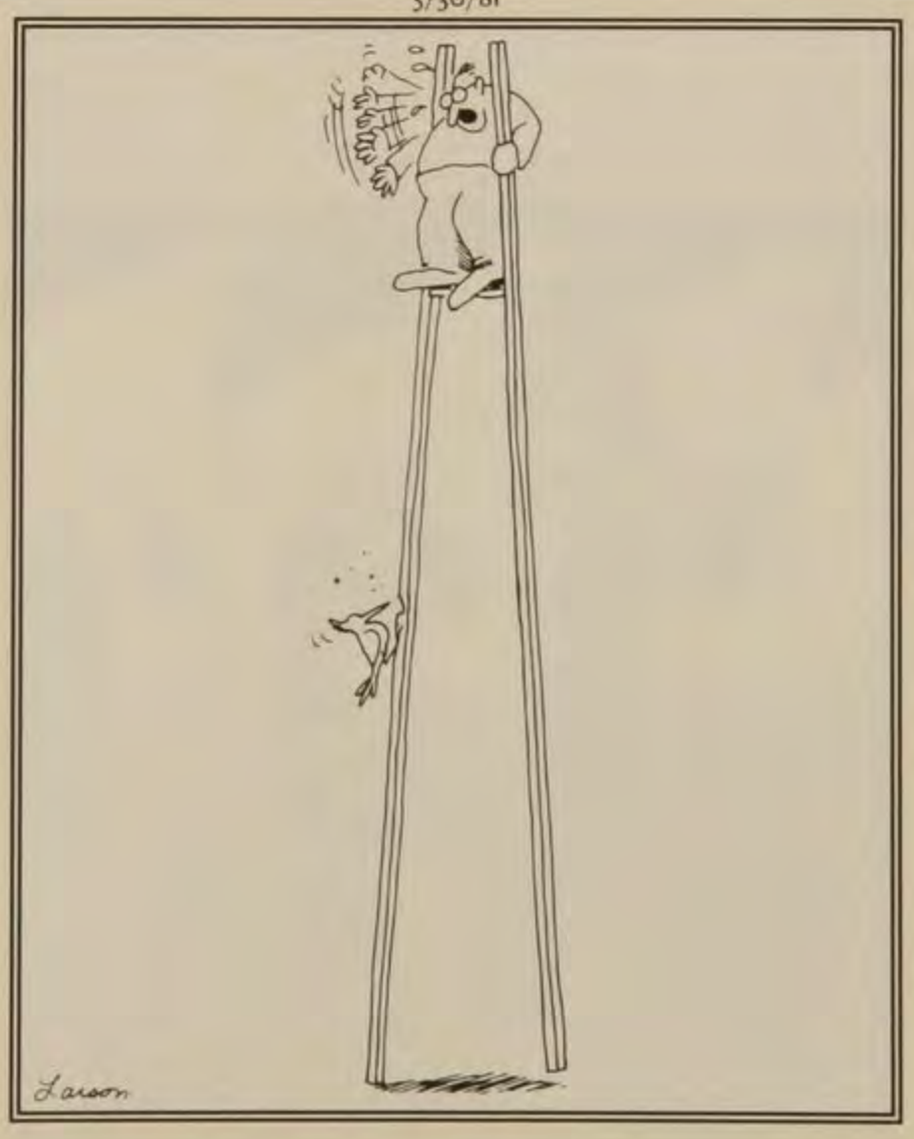
5/28/81



"Well, the Answer Man says, 'If the wheels start to spin, try rocking the car back and forth'..."

5/29/81

5/30/81



June 1981

"Honey, the Merrimonts are here. ... They'd like to come down and see your ape-man project."

"Hey, Durk! ... New cellmate, Durk! ... New cellmate! ... Friend, Durk! ... Friend!"

"That does it, Carl. ... You're through doing the bookings."

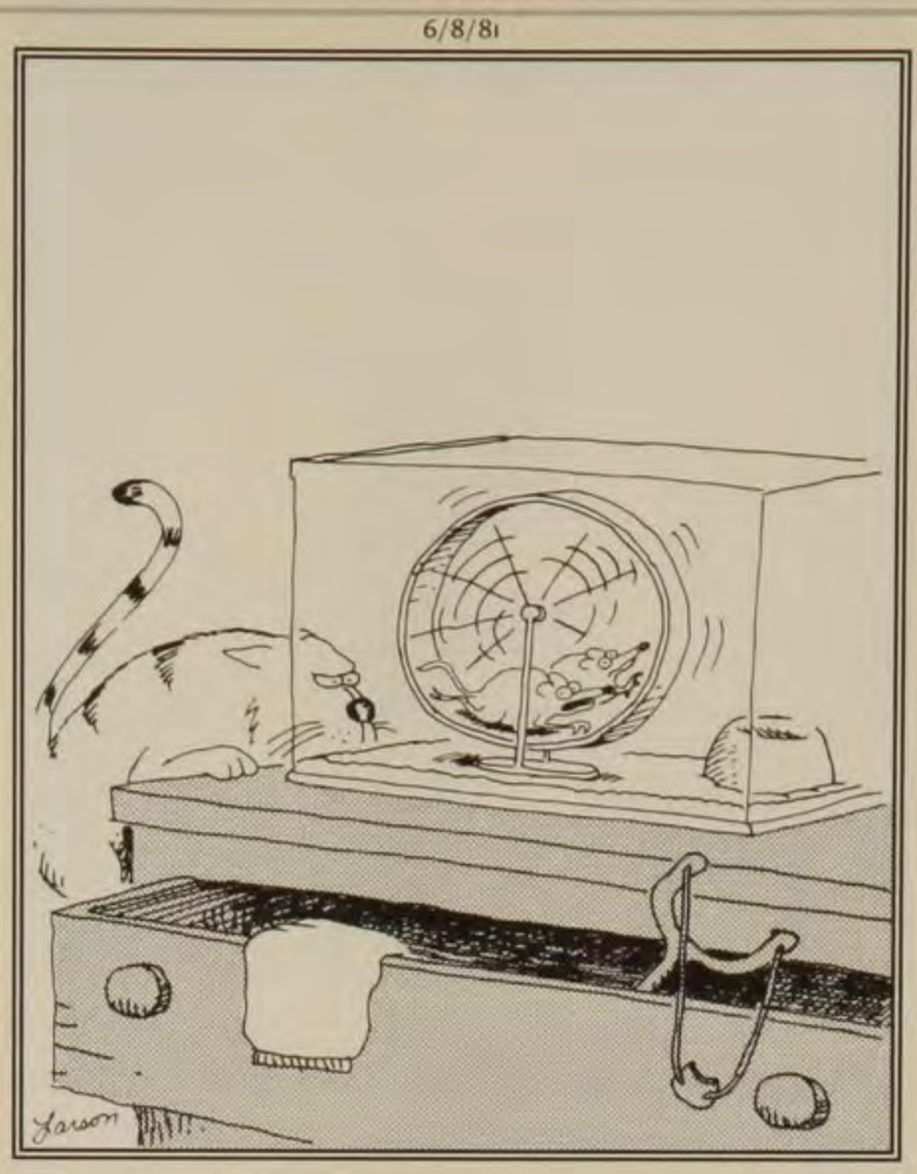
"Well, well. ... The great hunter returneth."

June 1981

6/5/81

"And then, whenever I come to the word 'chicken,' the couple here in front will jump up and make clucking sounds!"

6/8/81



"Faster! He's still there!"

6/10/81

"Well, I learned one thing. ... This works good on clothes, but don't try it on your dog."

6/11/81

June 1981

6/4/81

"Don't be alarmed, folks—he's completely harmless unless something startles him."

6/9/81

"Agnes! It's that heavy, chewing sound again!"

6/12/81

"No way! ... This time *I* get the legs and thighs; *you* get the wings and back!"

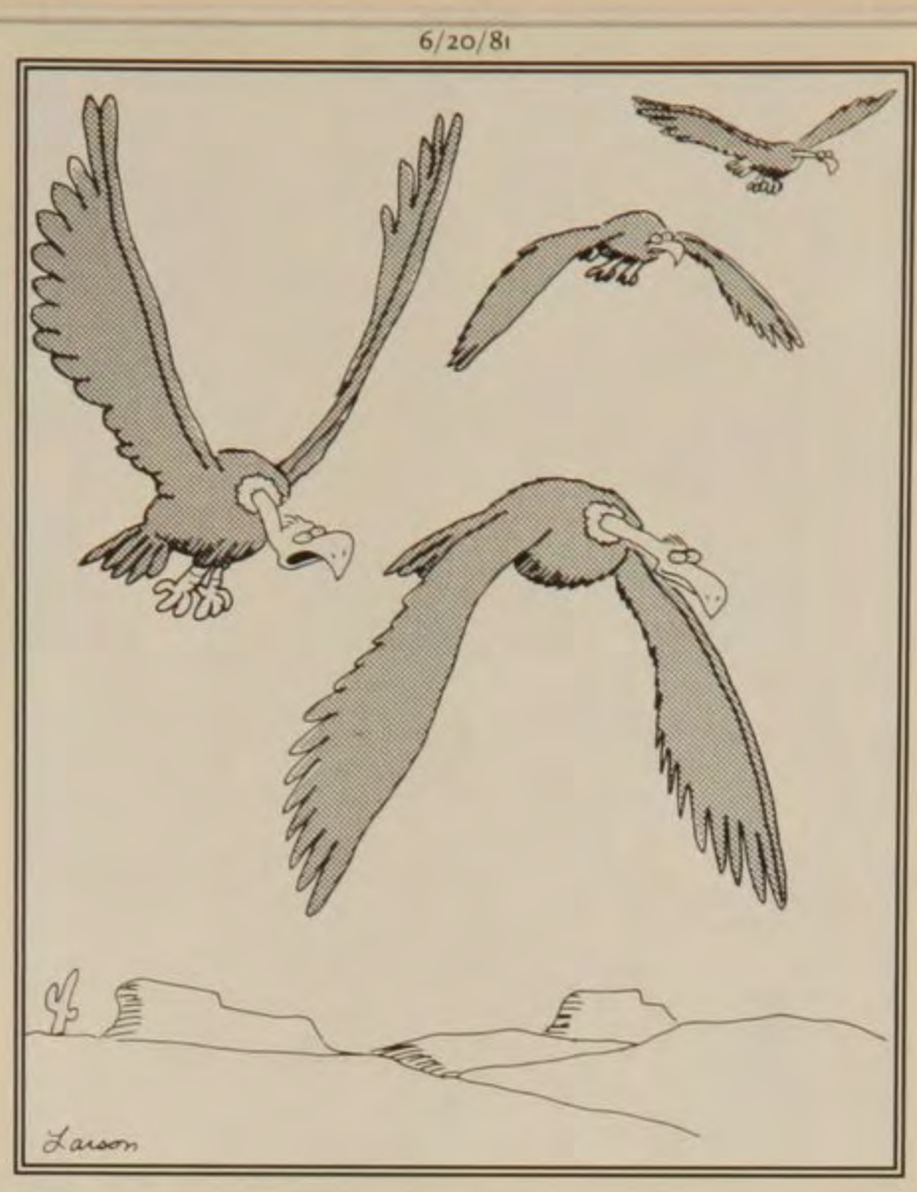
6/13/81

"I wish they'd keep those danged teenagers off the trails."

June 1981

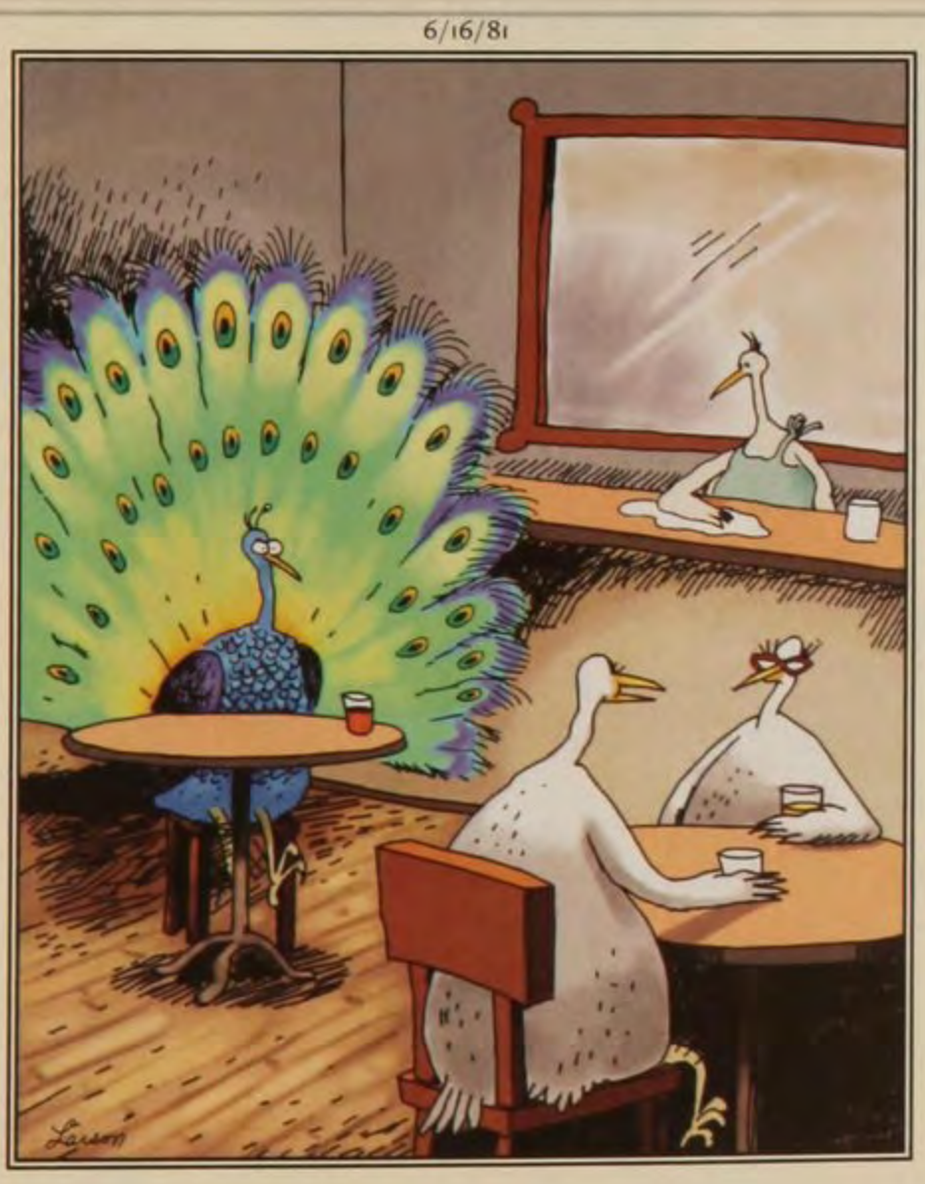
6/15/81

6/20/81



"Well, this better not be just a wild goose chase. ... Little Big Horn, huh?"

6/16/81



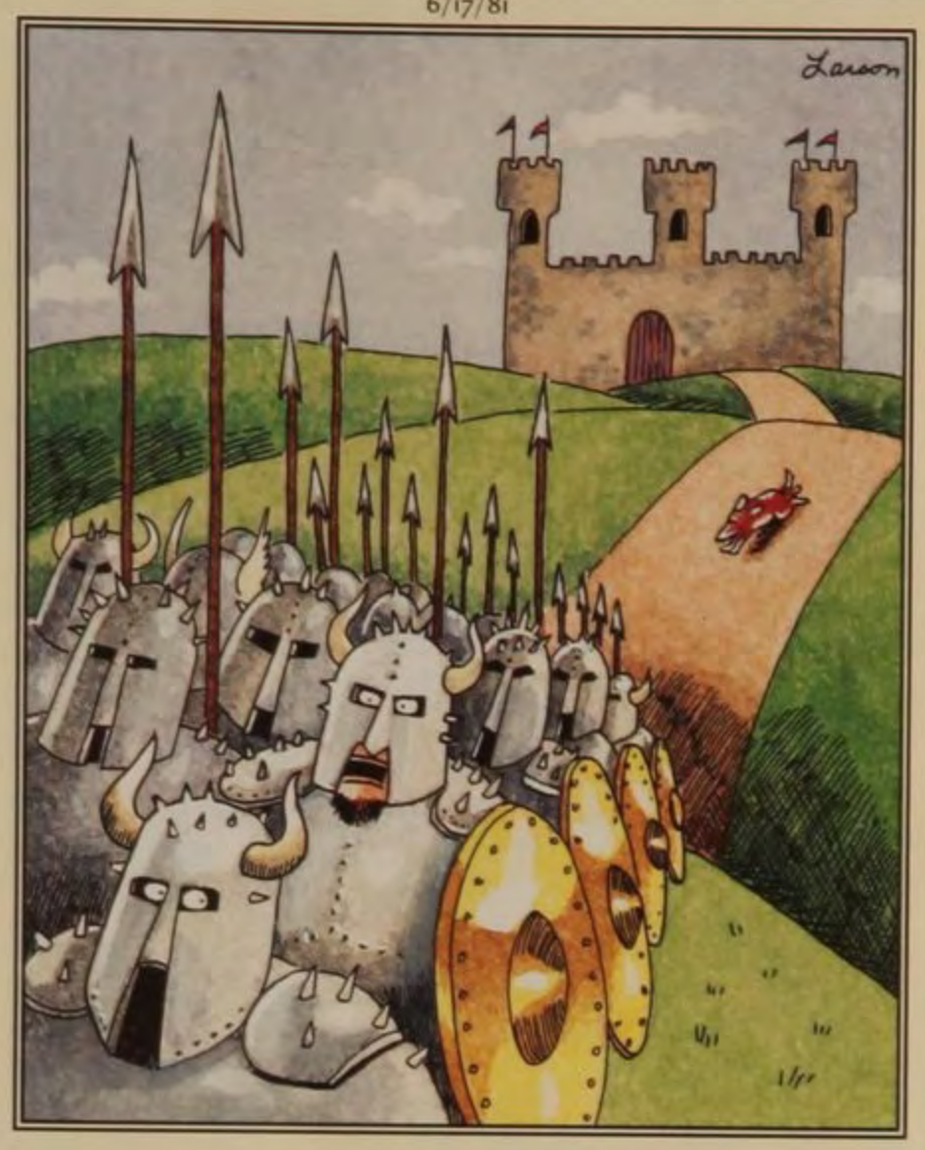
"Don't encourage him, Sylvia."

6/18/81

"Doesn't have buck teeth, doesn't have buck teeth, doesn't have ..."

June 1981

6/17/81

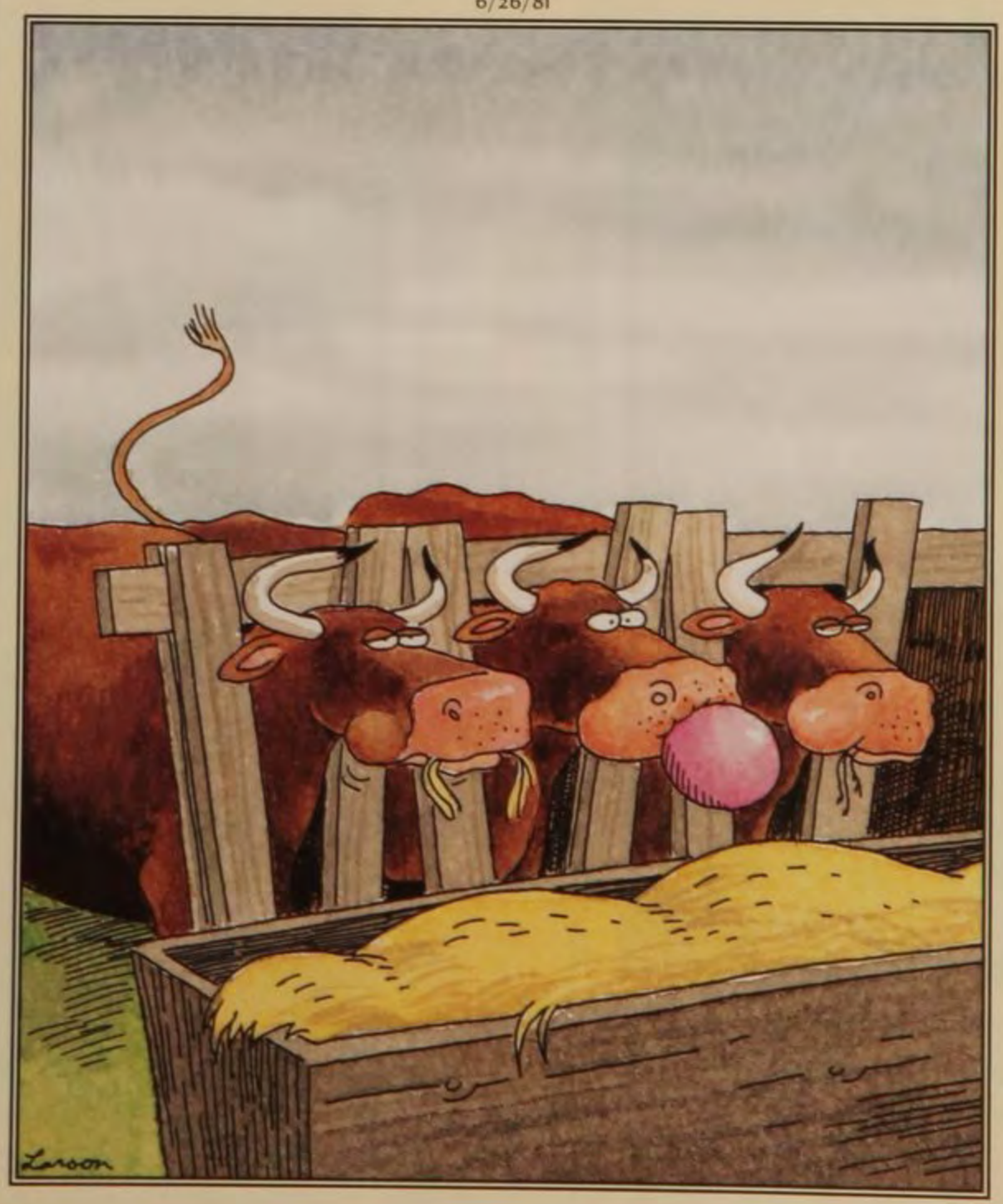


"Hey, Richard! Your stupid dog's following us again!"

6/19/81

"Hot oil! We need hot oil! ... Forget the water balloons!"

6/26/81



June 1981

6/24/81

"With a little luck, they may revere us as gods."

6/23/81

"Nothing yet. ... How about you, Newton?"

6/27/81

June 1981

6/22/81

"Andrew ... the cows have come home."

6/25/81

"Vive la difference."

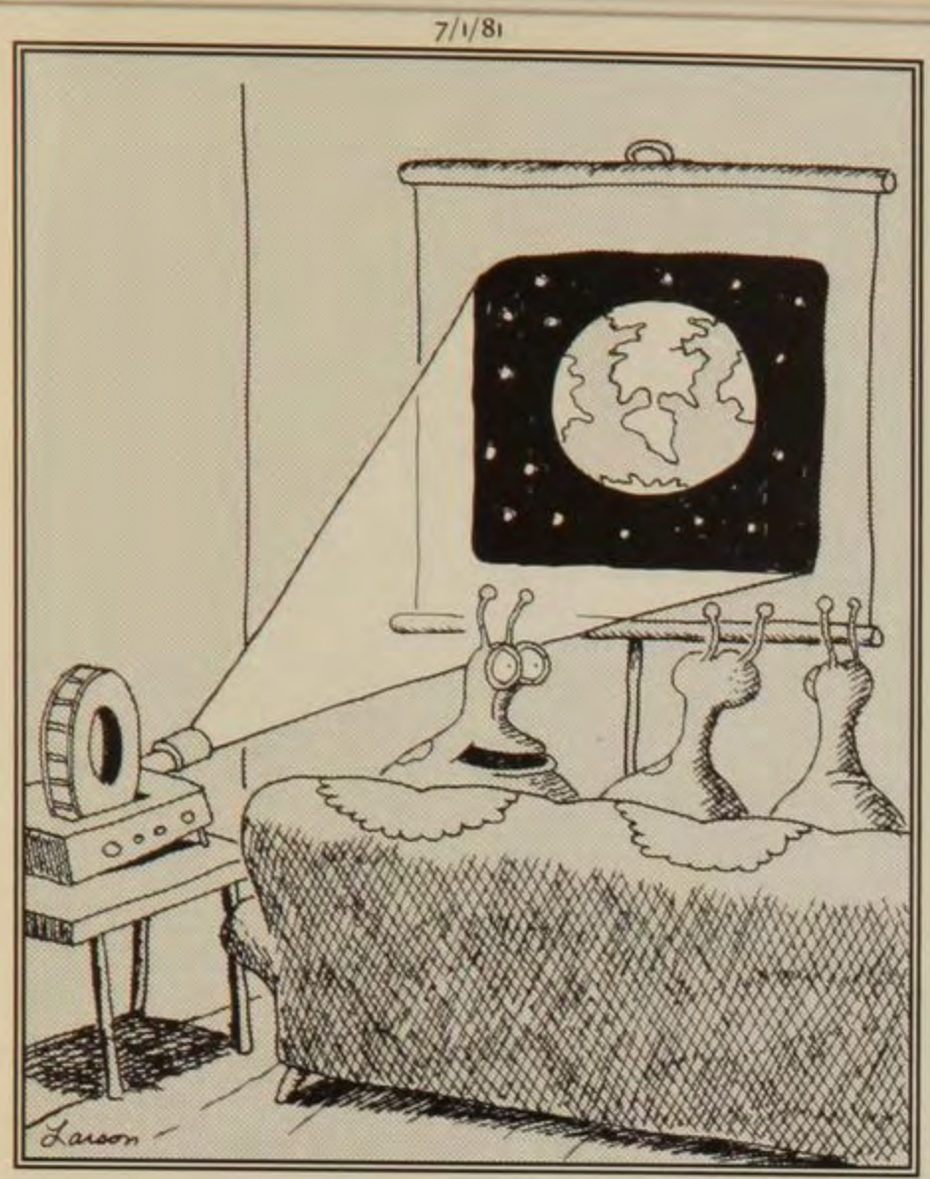
6/29/81

"Dear Henry: Where were you? We waited and waited but finally decided that ..."

6/30/81

"Hey! You kids! ... Can't you read?"

July 1981



"Oh, yeah. ... Now that place was *really* a greasy spoon!"

"God help us all."

"Listen ... this party's a drag. But later on, Floyd, Warren, and myself are going over to Farmer Brown's and slaughter some chickens."

July 1981

"It's no use. ... We've just got to get ourselves a real damsel."

"Well, I never thought about it before ... but I suppose I'd let the kid go for about $1.99 a pound."

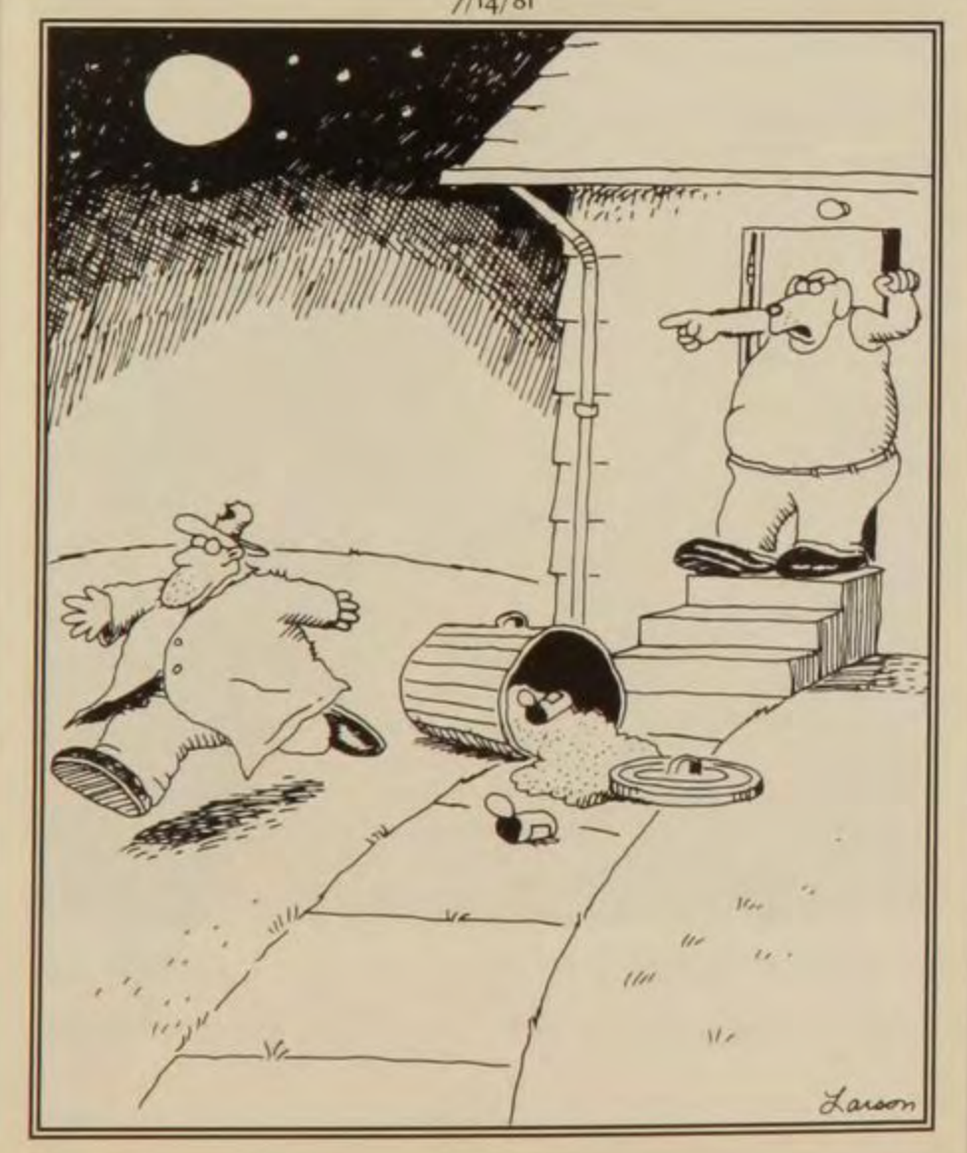
July 1981

7/13/81

"Andrew! So that's where you've been! And good heavens! ... There's my old hairbrush, too!"

7/10/81

7/14/81

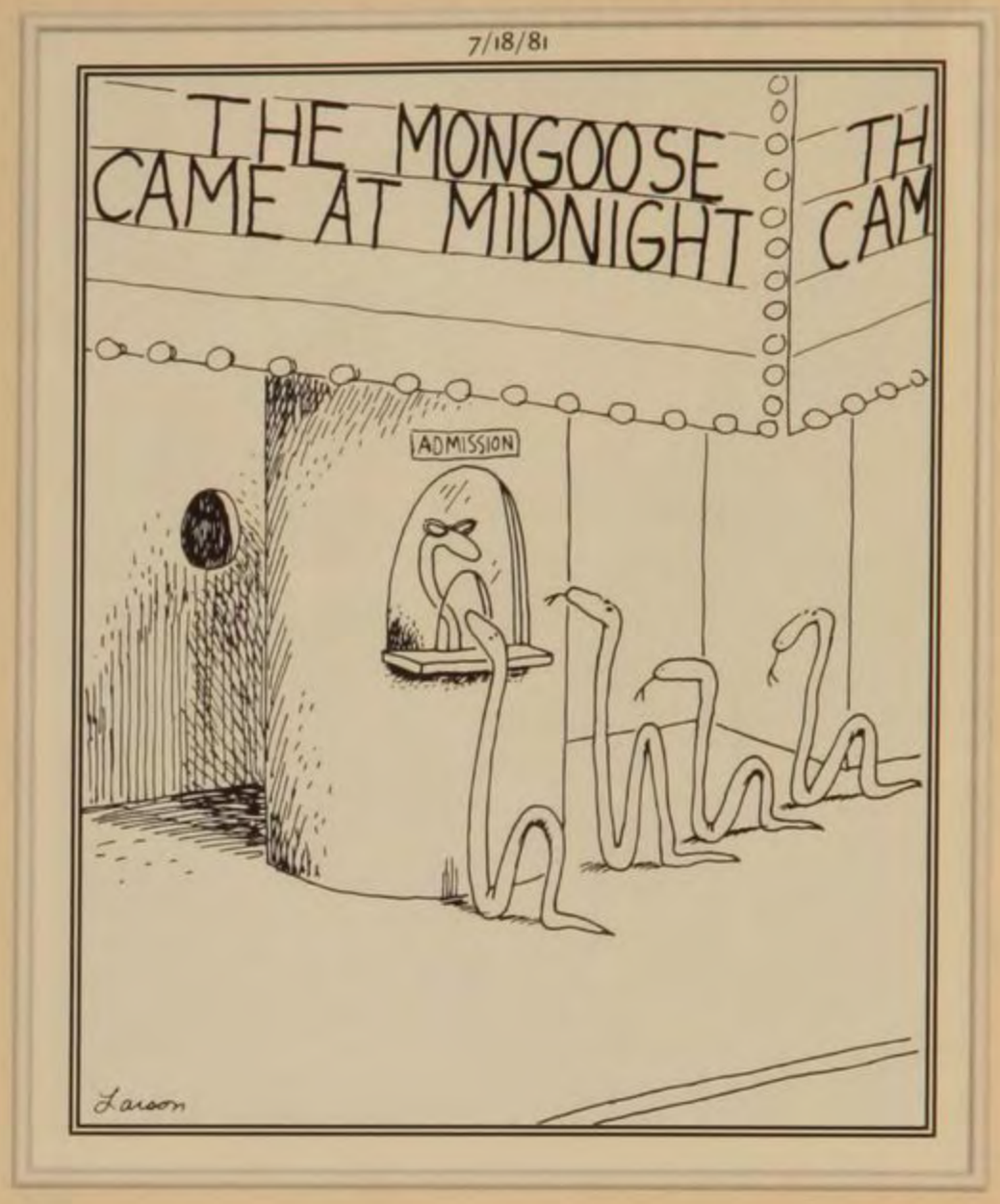


7/15/81

"Remember, milk, eggs, loaf of bread ... and pick up one of those No-Penguin-Strips."

July 1981

The discovery of tools



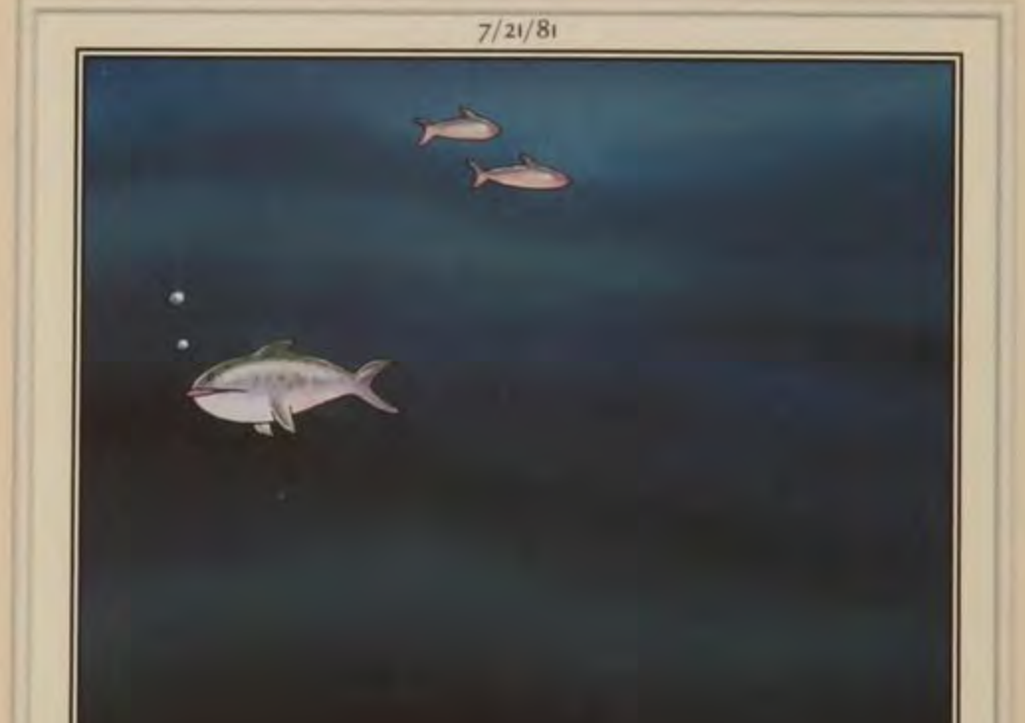
"I'm afraid you've got cows, Mr. Farnsworth."

July 1981

"Oh, all right, Barnaby! ... One more quarter and *then* we're going home!"

"Reuben! The Johnsons are here! You come up this instant ... or I'll get the hose!"

"Well, we're back!"



"We're almost free, everyone! I just felt the first drop of rain!"

July 1981

"Other cities get giant gorillas or dinosaurs. ...
But what do *we* get?"

"Okay, Pete! Start the pressure nice and easy."

"Put it back in the rock, Barbara—you couldn't even slice a tomato with that old thing."

July 1981

7/27/81

"I never got his name, but he sure cleaned up this town."

7/30/81

"Hey! Look! ... No hands!"

7/31/81

August 1981

8/3/81

"No ... this is 221 Chestnut Drive. ... You want the big place around the corner."

8/1/81

"Skinny legs! ... I got skinny legs!"

8/4/81

"Dear ... have you seen the beef brains I bought for supper tonight?"

8/5/81

"Damn! ... I can't hibernate."

August 1981

8/6/81

"That's not funny, Malcolm! There will be no more floating belly-up on the surface!"

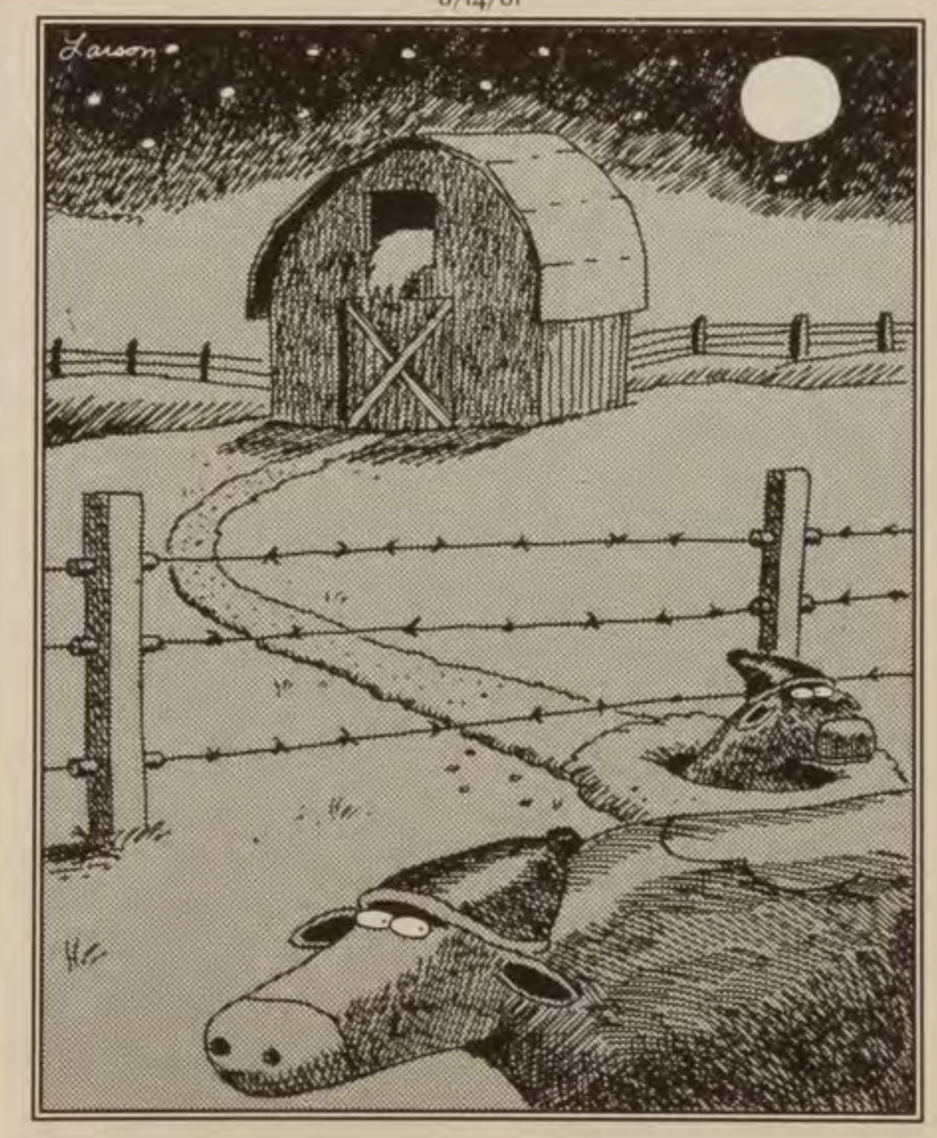
8/11/81

"I can't believe it! One lousy little bee gets inside and you just freak out!"

8/12/81

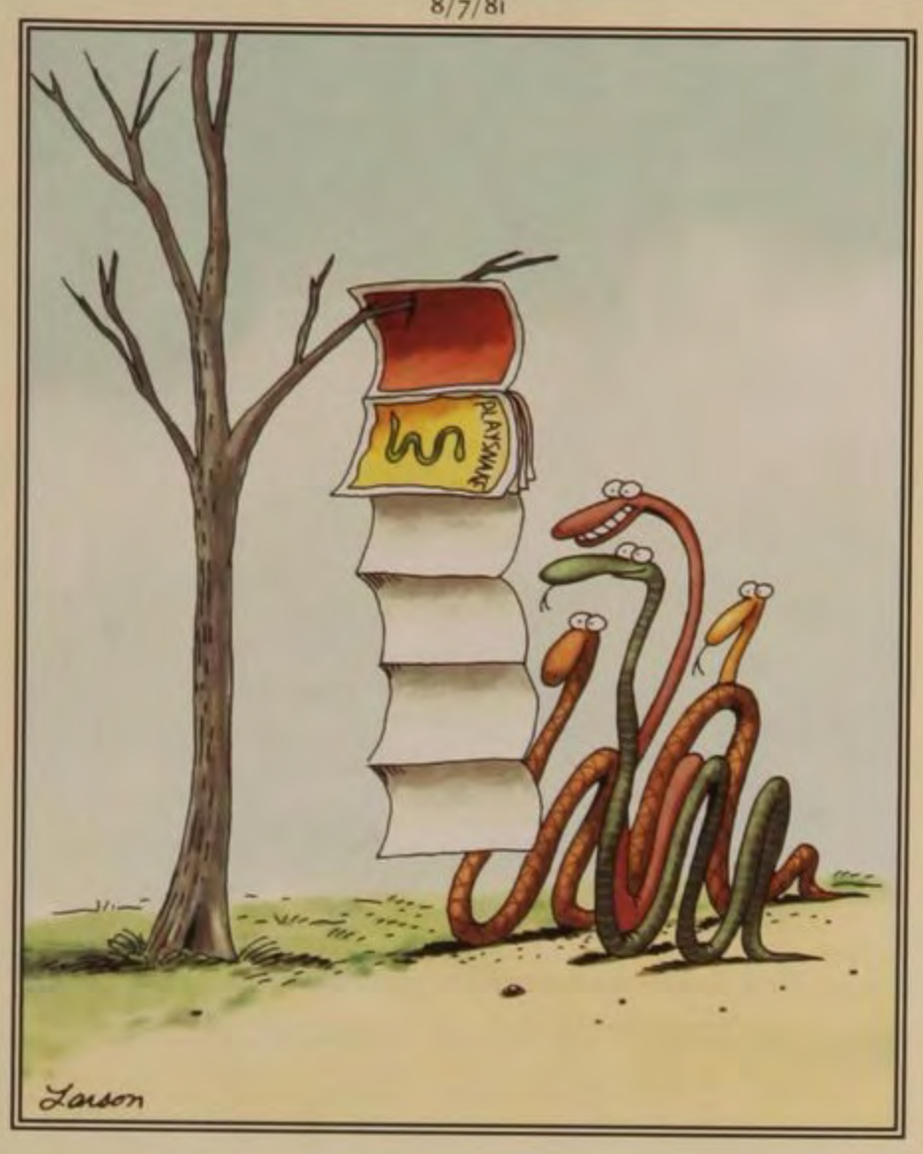
"Hey! What's this *Drosophila melanogaster* doing in my soup?"

8/14/81

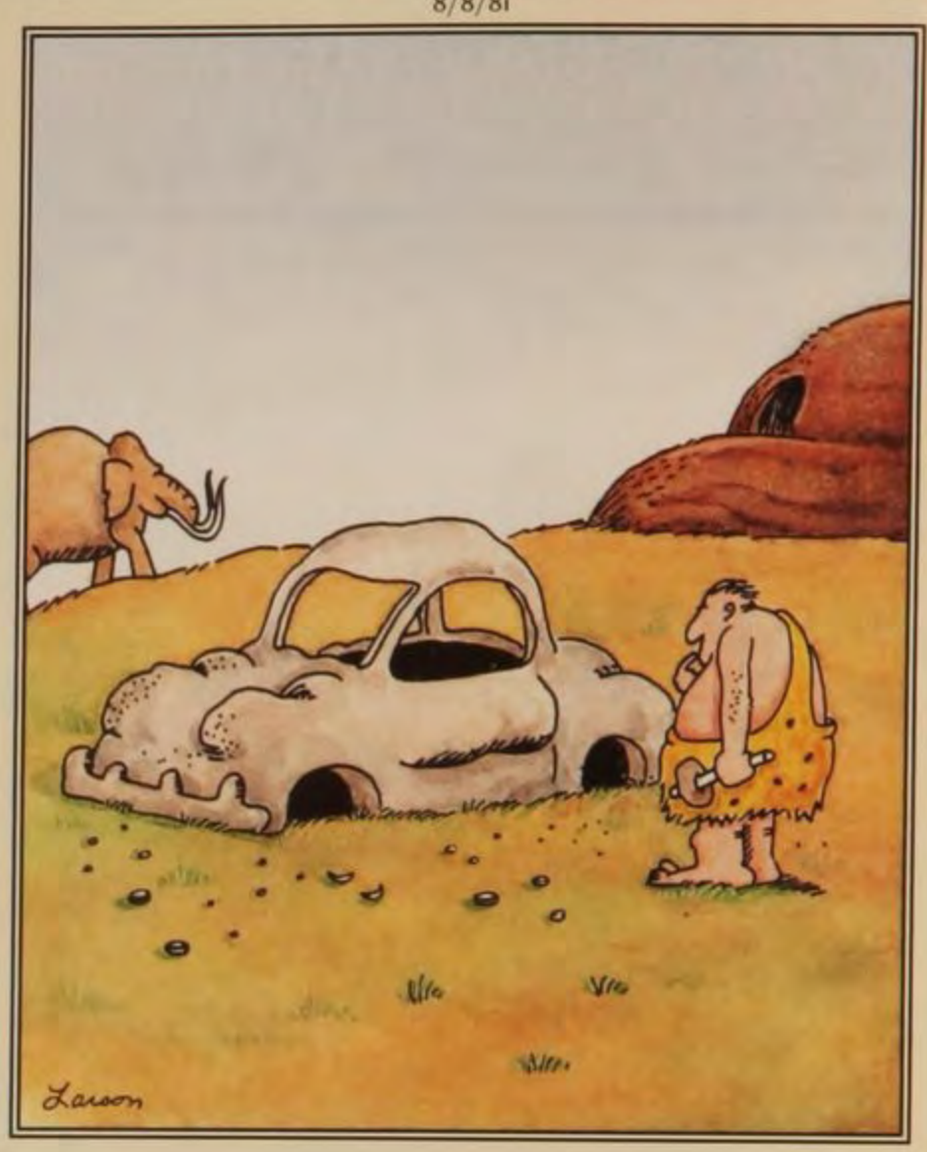


August 1981

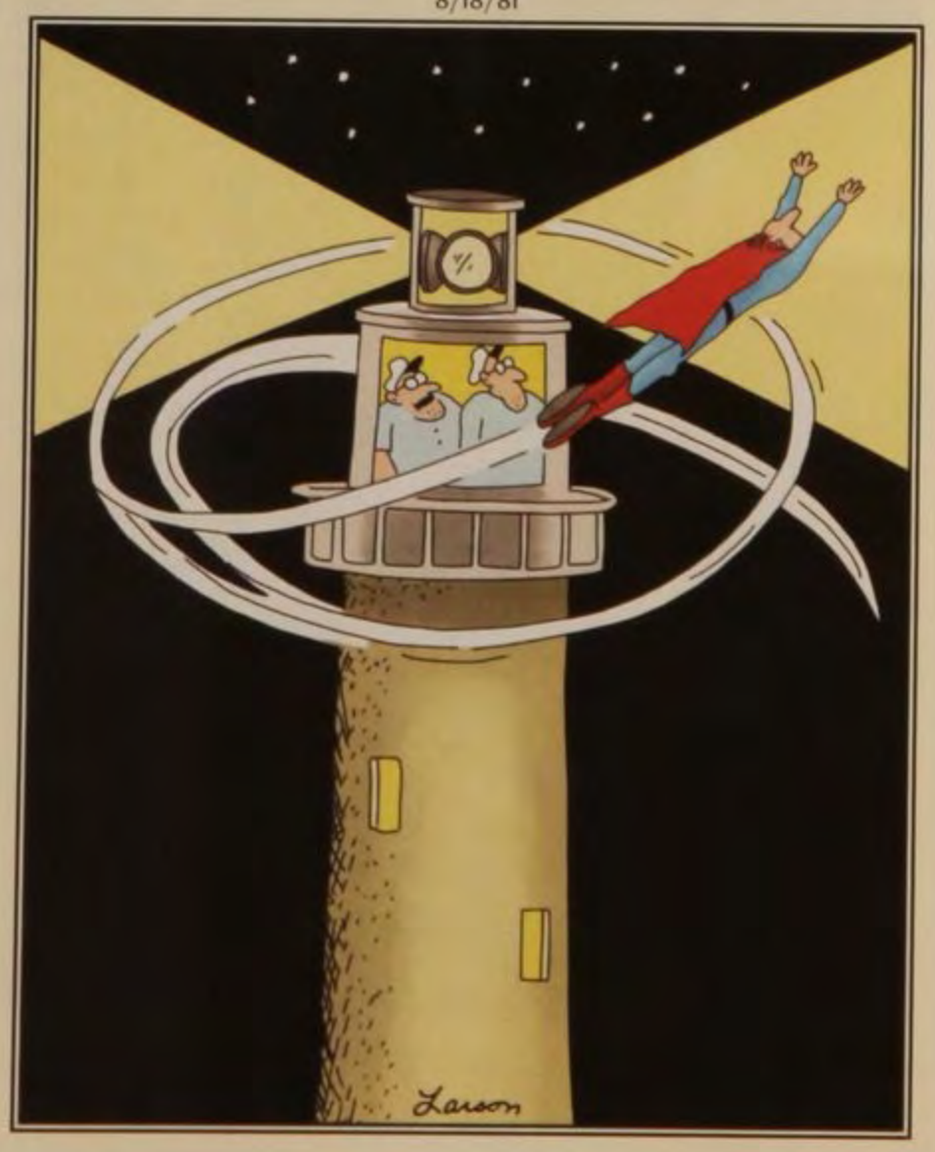
8/7/81



8/8/81

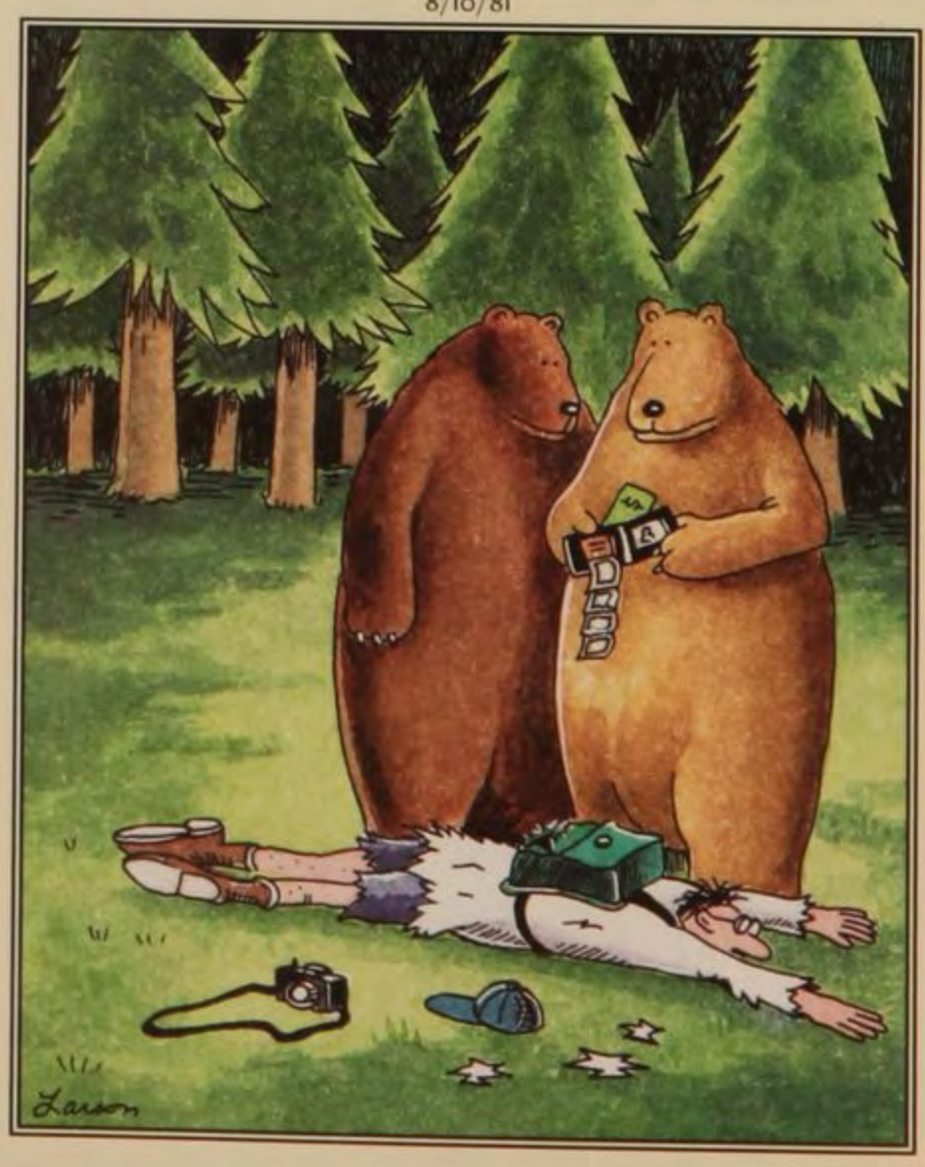


8/18/81



"For God's sake, kill the lights, Murray—
he's back again!"

8/10/81



August 1981

8/19/81

"And next, for show-and-tell, Bobby Henderson says he has something he found on the beach last summer. ..."

8/13/81

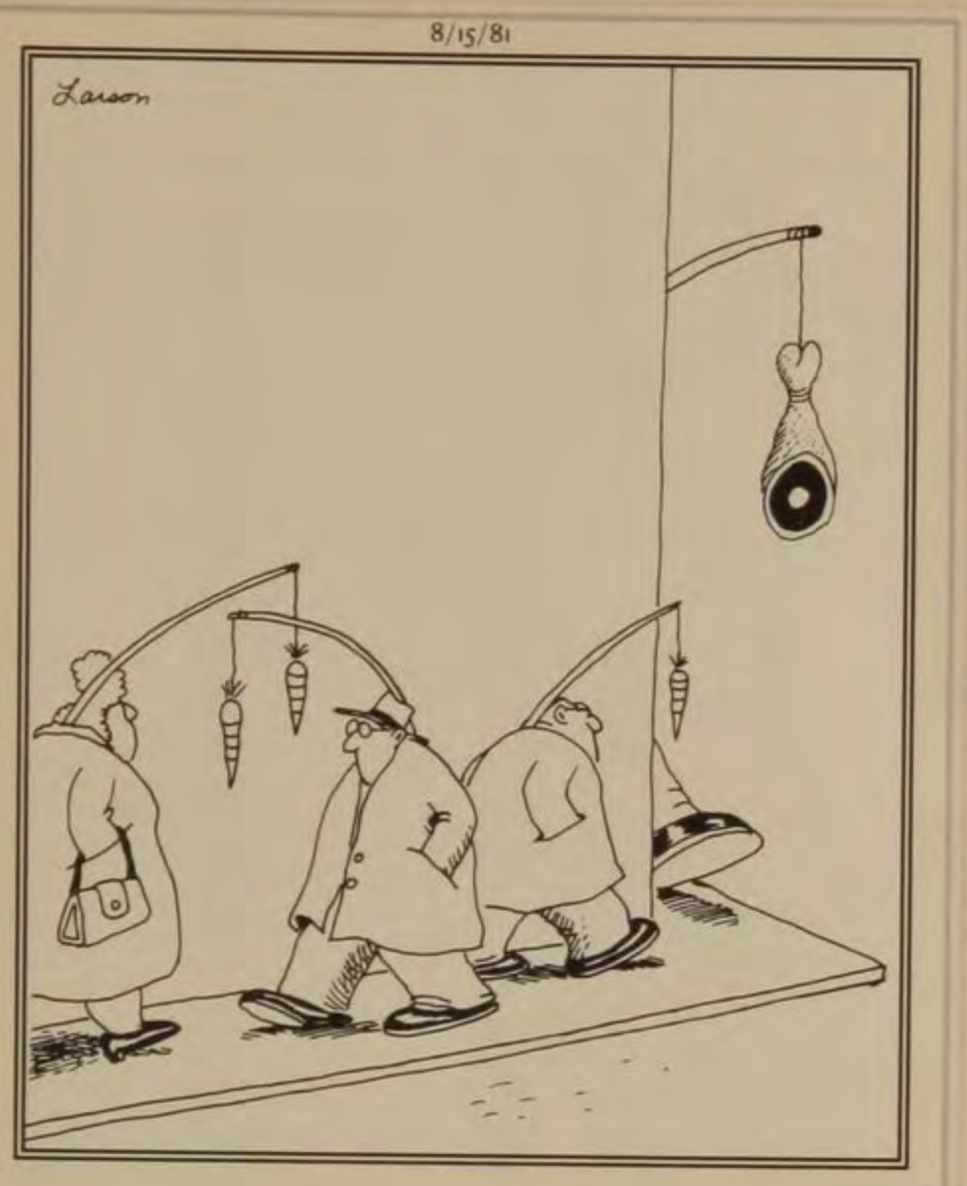
"Oh, brother! ... Not hamsters again!"

8/20/81

As the first duck kept Margaret's attention, the second one made its move.

August 1981

8/15/81



8/17/81

"Blast it, Agnes! If you're going to put your cold feet on me, you could at least dry them first."

8/21/81

"Sure, I like her ... but she doesn't even know I exist."

8/22/81

"ALERT! ALERT! ... IT'S THE SUCKING DEATH!"

August 1981

8/24/81

8/26/81

"What a day! I must have spread malaria across half the country."

8/29/81

"Now stay calm. ... Let's hear what they said to Bill."

8/27/81

"And, as you shall soon observe, we are quite proud of our test tube baby progress."

August 1981

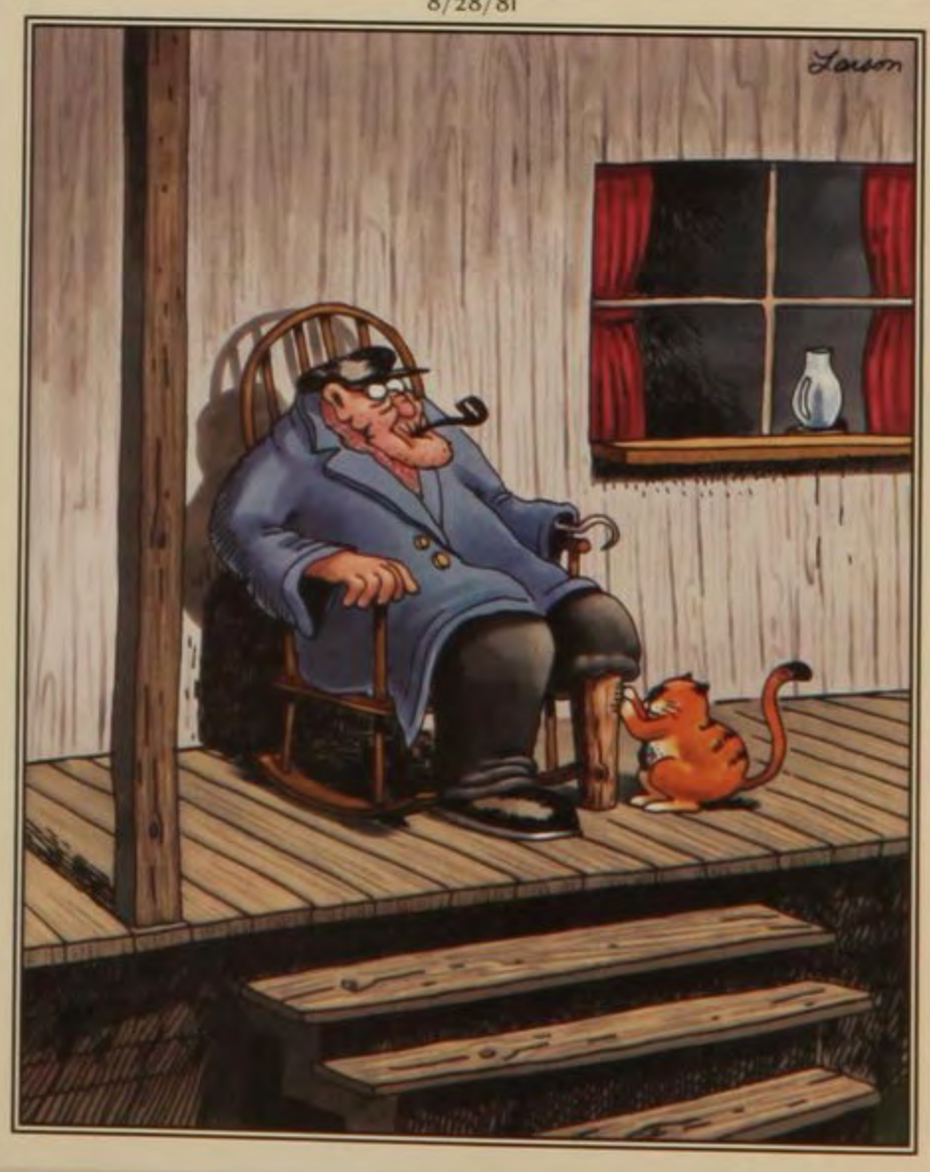
8/25/81

"On the other hand, what if we aren't alone in the universe?"

8/31/81

"So! ... You *still* won't talk, eh?"

8/28/81



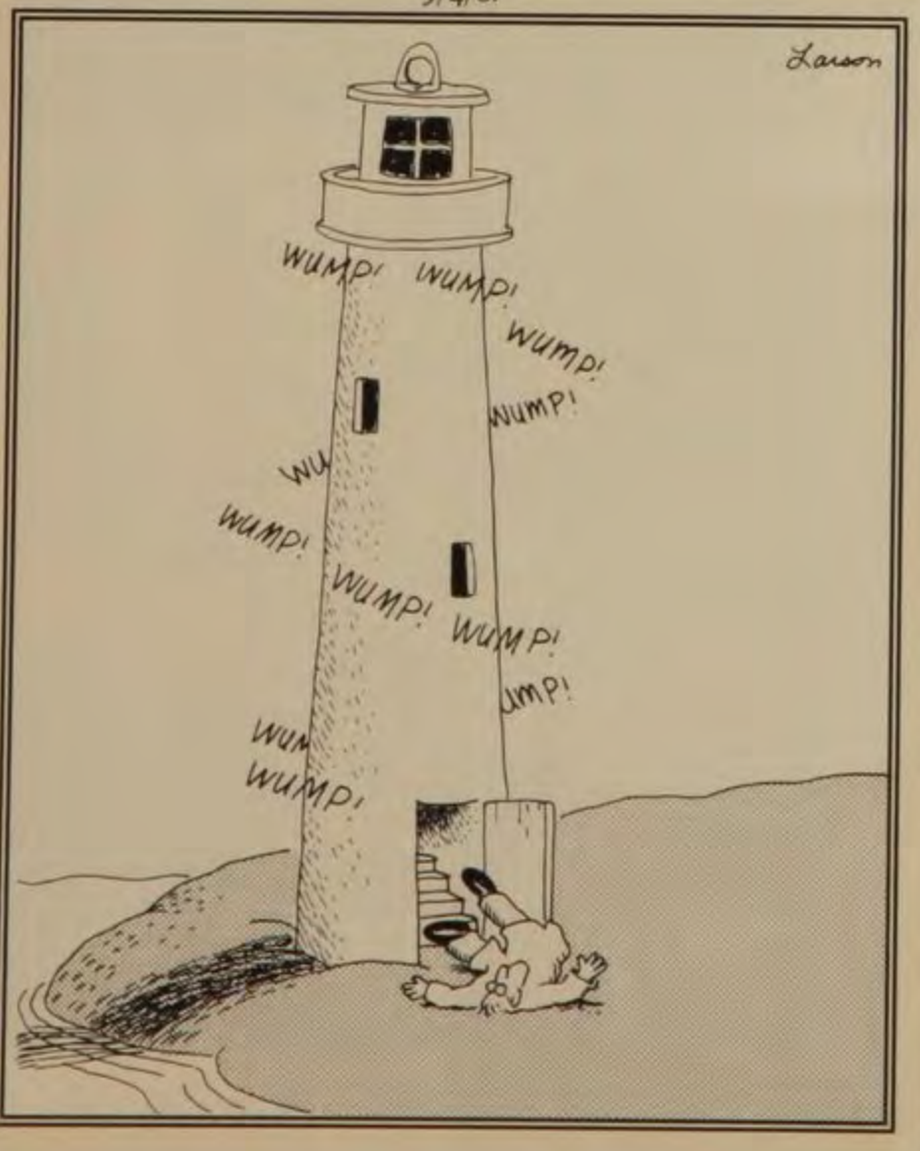
September 1981

"I can't believe this! Can't *anyone* here get the lid off the mayonnaise?"

"You're kidding! I was struck twice by lightning too!"

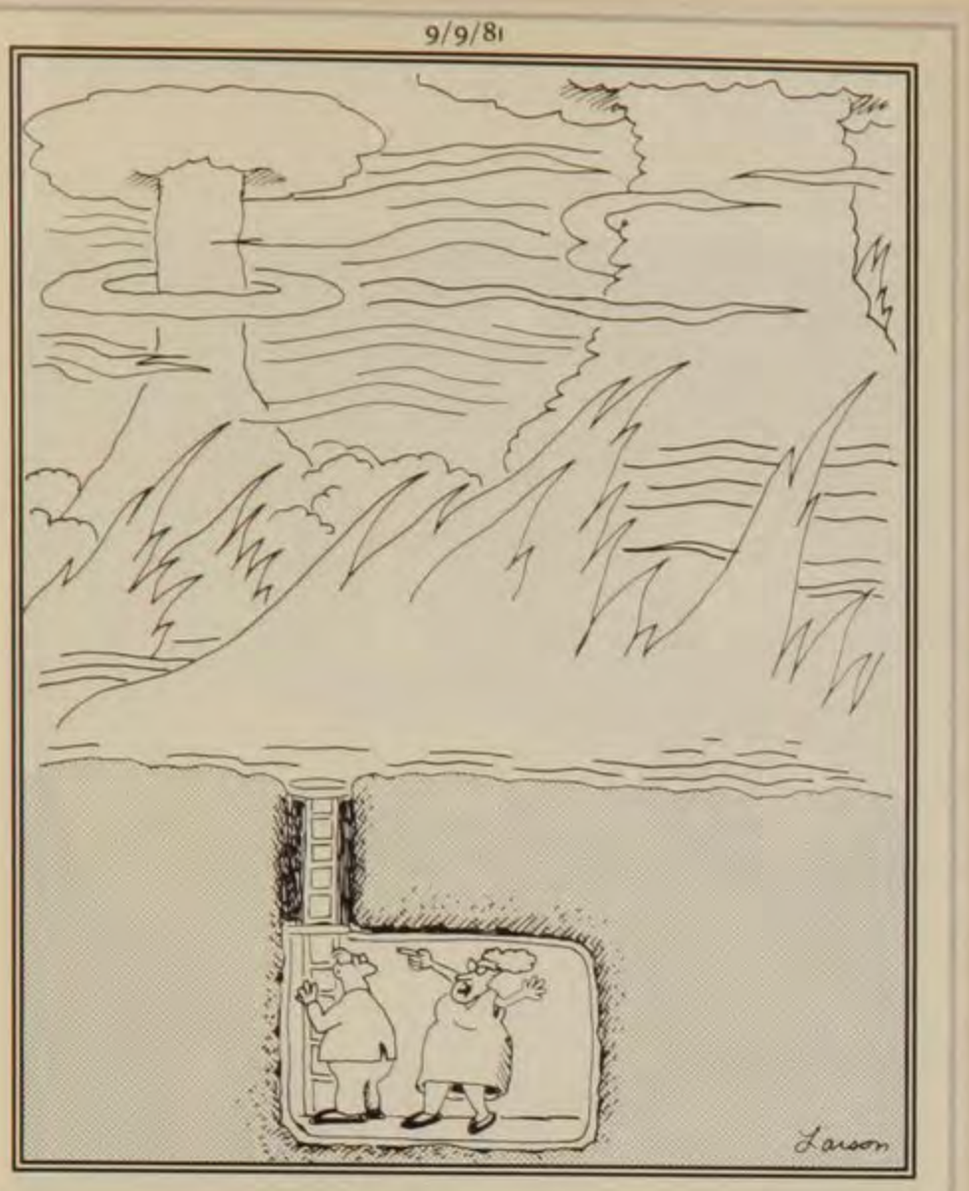
September 1981

"Anyone for a chorus of 'Happy Trails'?"



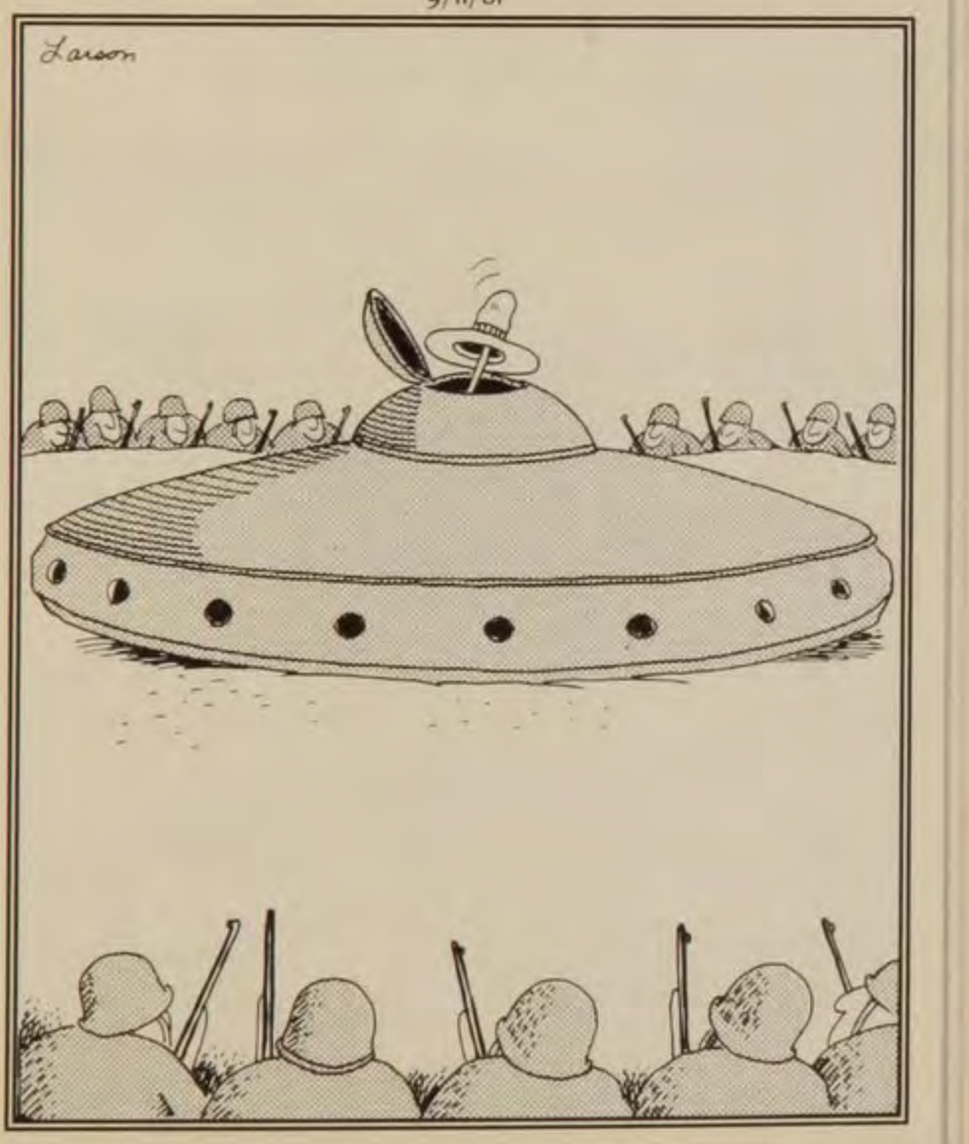
"Tough-guy, huh?"

September 1981



"Arnold! The bird! The bird! ... You get back up there and get the bird!"

"C'mon, let's go! Remember Pharaoh's favorite mottoes: 'Many hands make light work, a job worth doing is worth doing well, and death to the laggard!'"



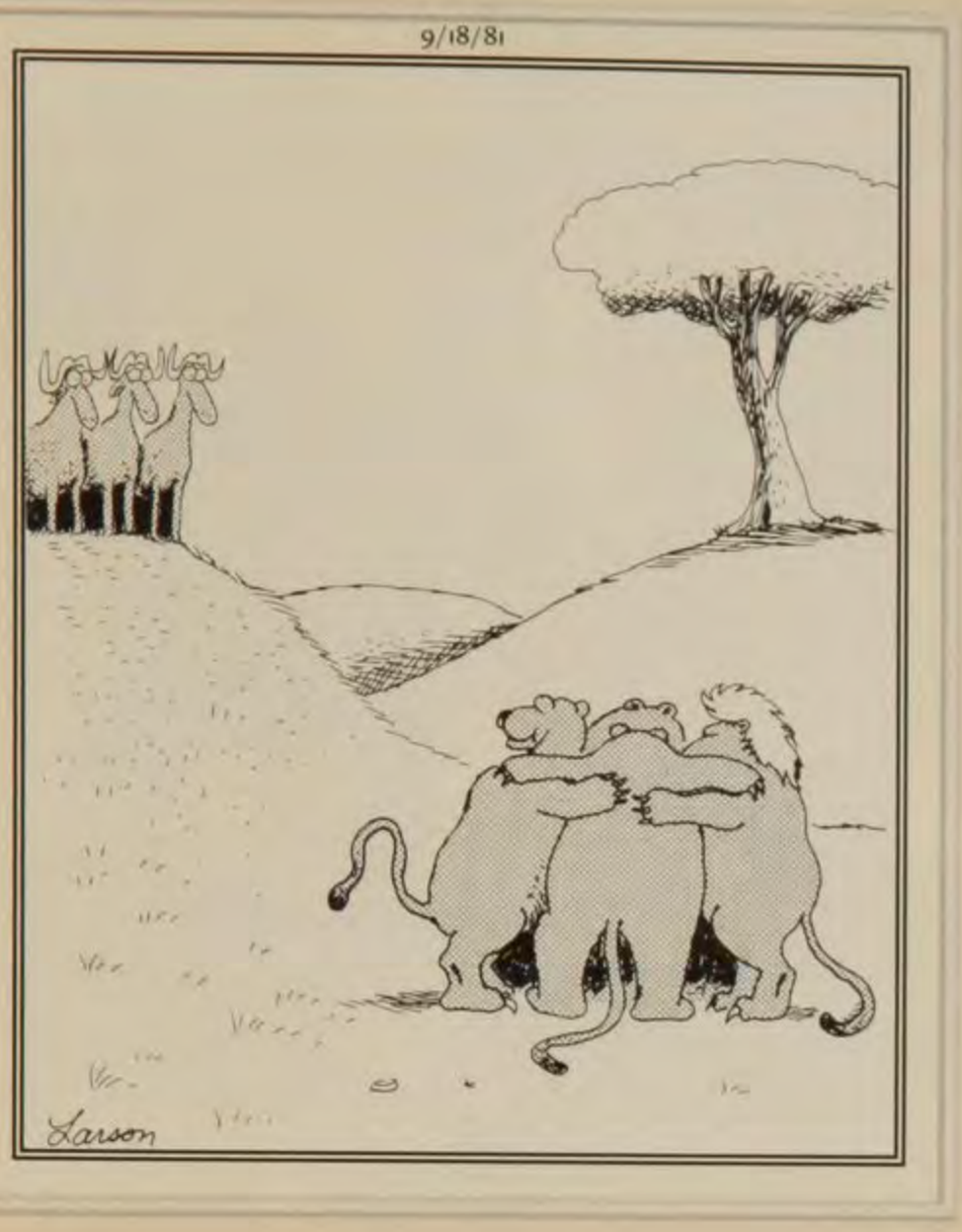
September 1981

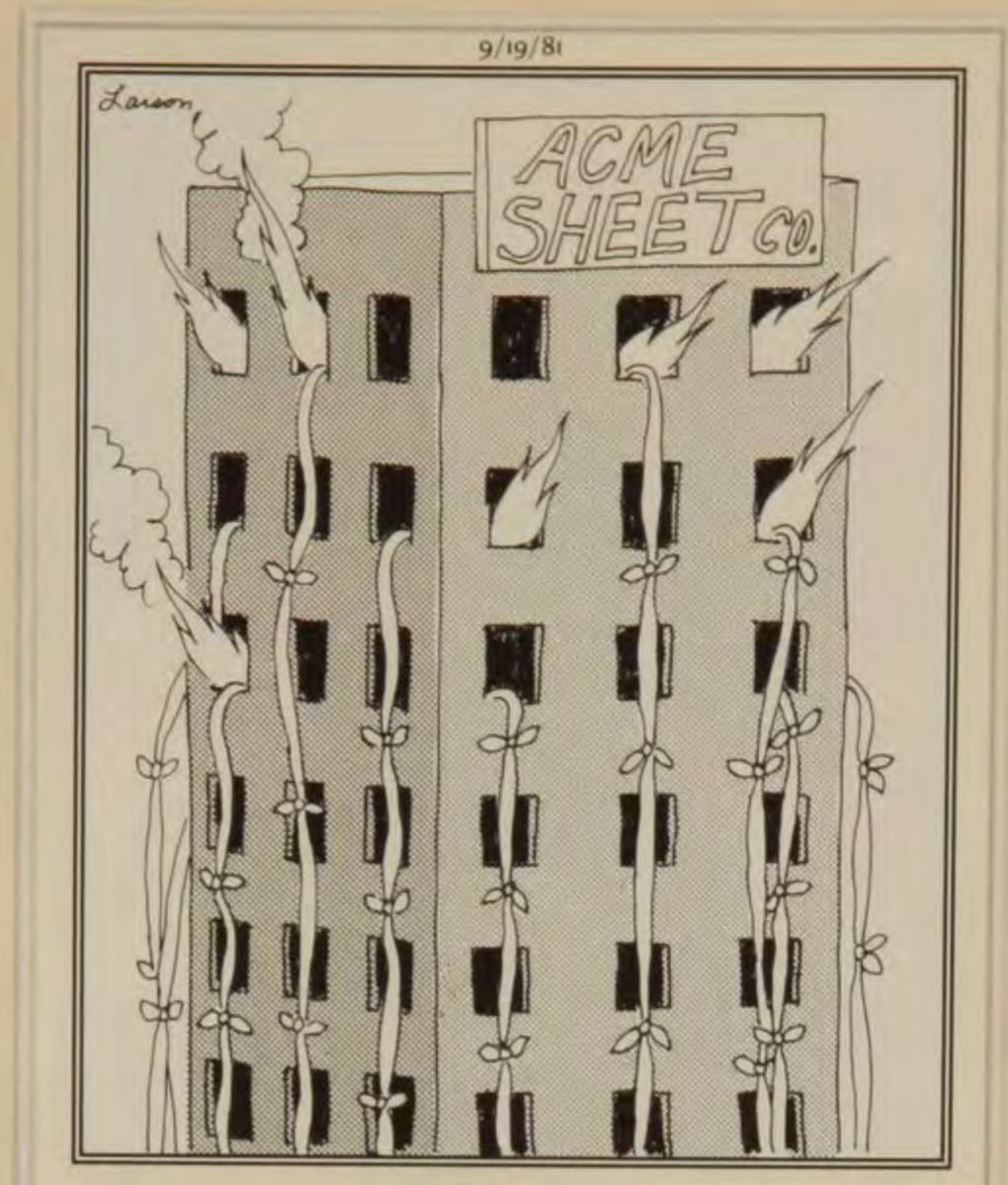
"What do you make of it, Earl? ... A small, pea-green boat, drifting way out here—empty, except for those two little skeletons."

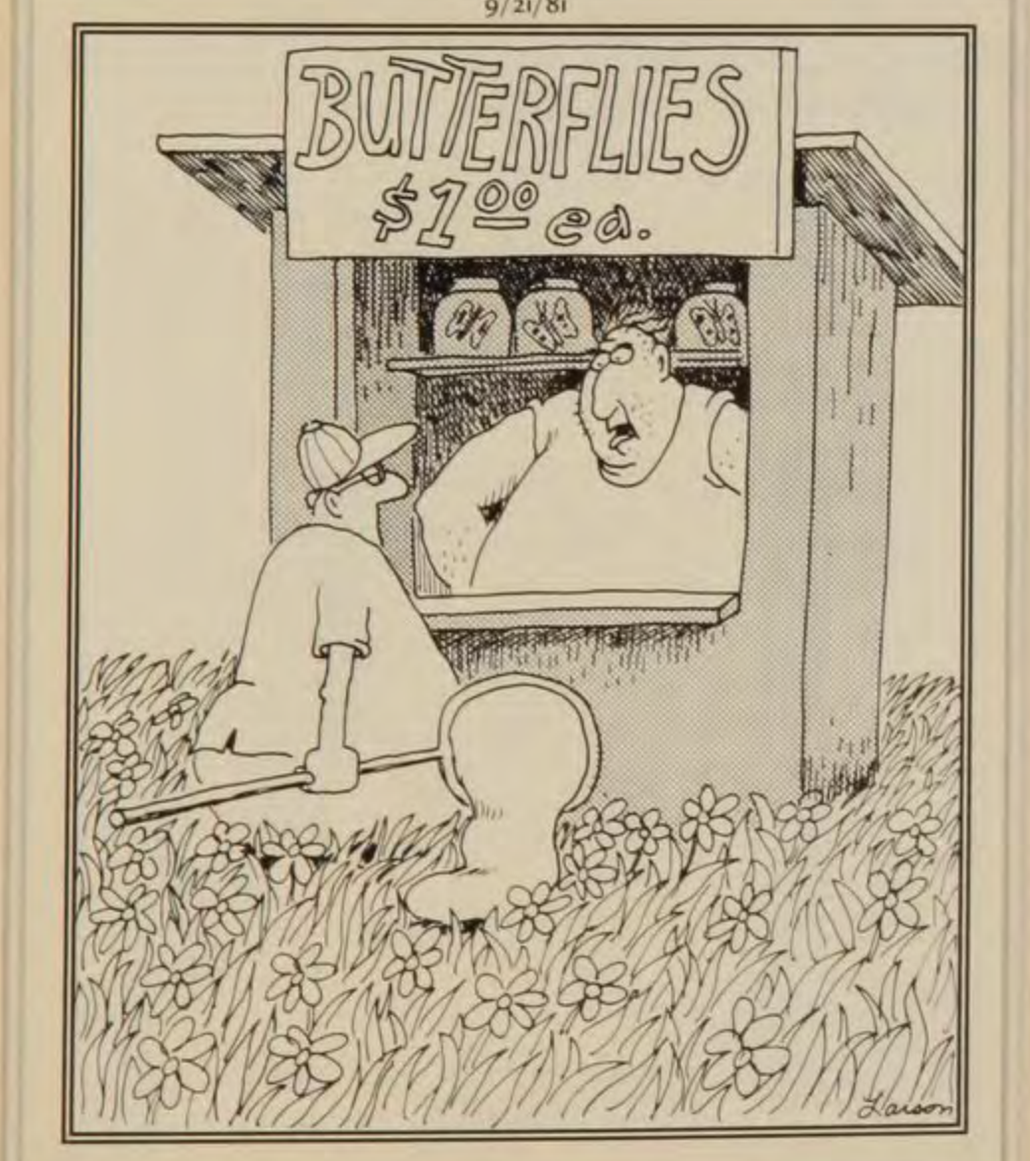
"I daresay there's a woman in Mayfield, Nebraska, who believes in UFOs."

"RETREAT!"

September 1981







"Well, they ain't free anymore, buddy."

"Oh, my! ... What a *cute* little maggot!"

September 1981

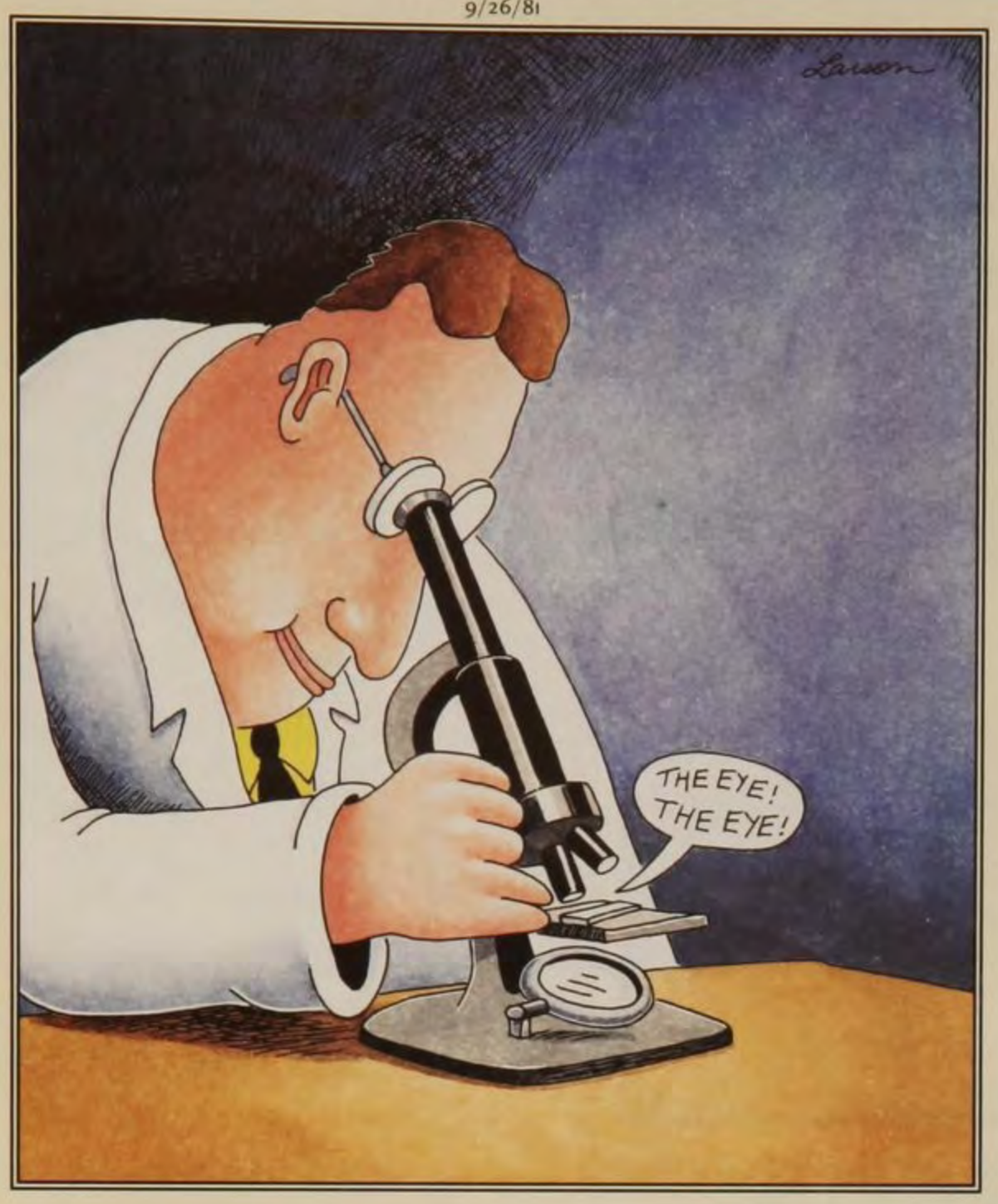
"Egad, Alex! I'm losing some wrinkles!"

"So! ... Out bob bob bobbing along again!"

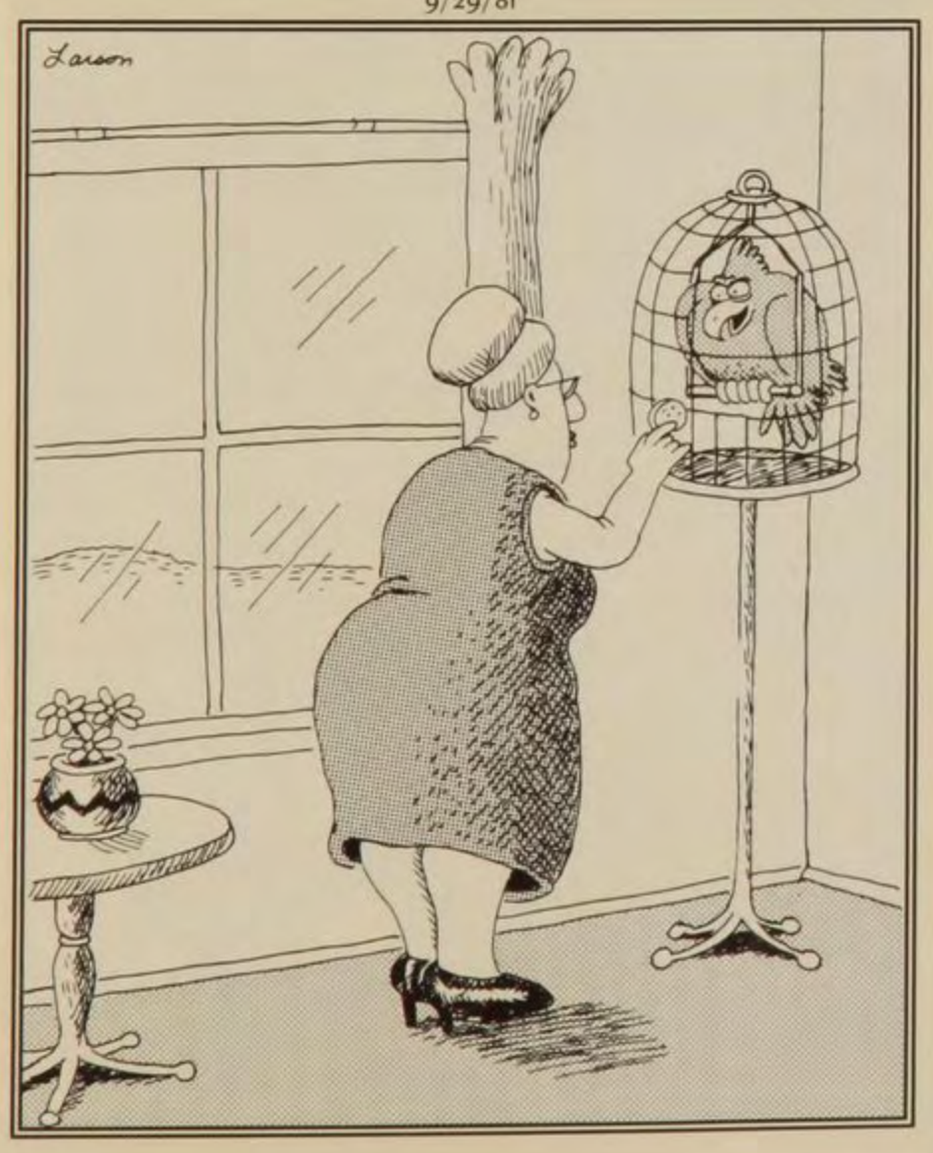
"Well, I dunno. This one's a little beak-worn. ...
How much do you want for it?"

September 1981

9/26/81



9/29/81

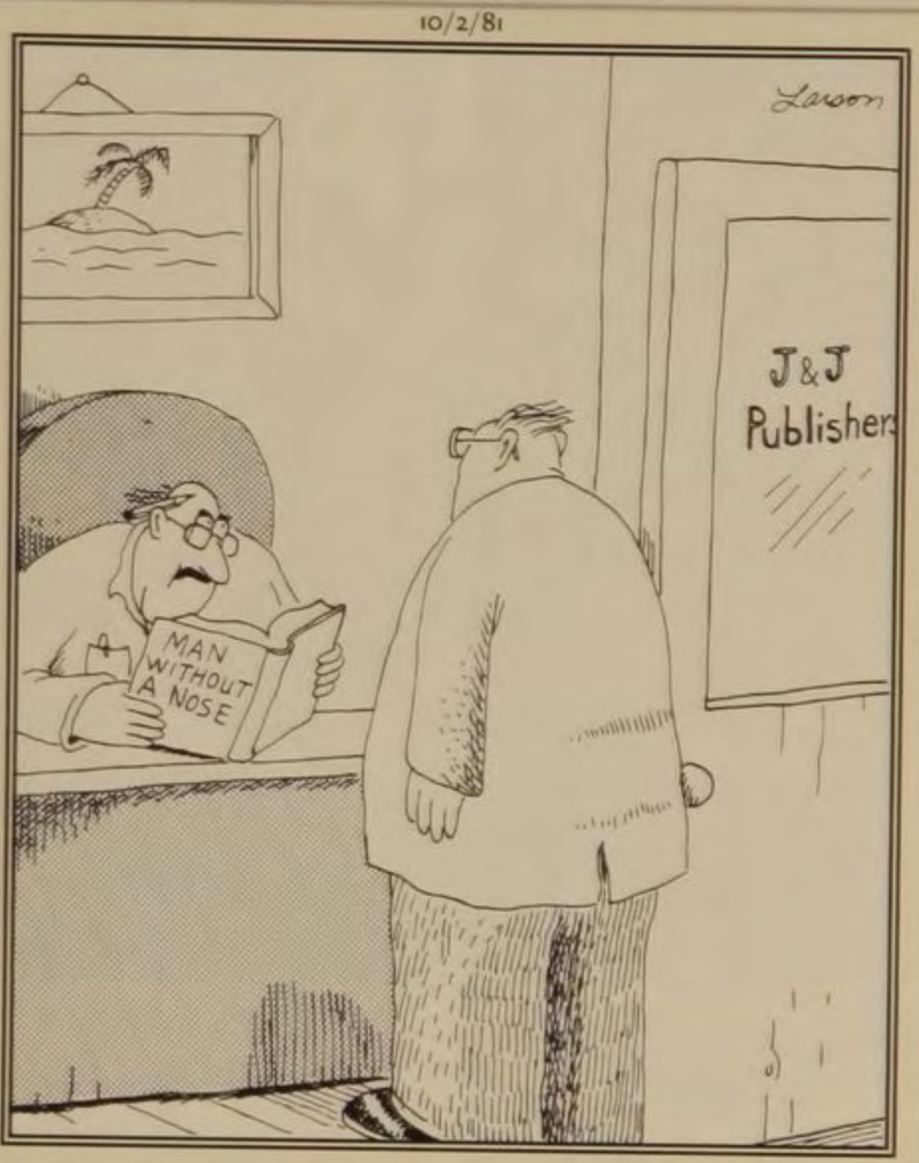


"Polly wanna finger."

9/30/81

"Okay now, listen up! ... First, I want all the car-chasers over here!"

October 1981



"Autobiography I presume?"

"C'mon, c'mon! Either it's here or it isn't!"

"Through the hoop, Bob! Through the hoop!"

October 1981

10/7/81

"Gad, I hate walking through this place at night."

10/5/81

10/9/81

"Egad! ... Sounds like the farmer's wife has really flipped out this time!"

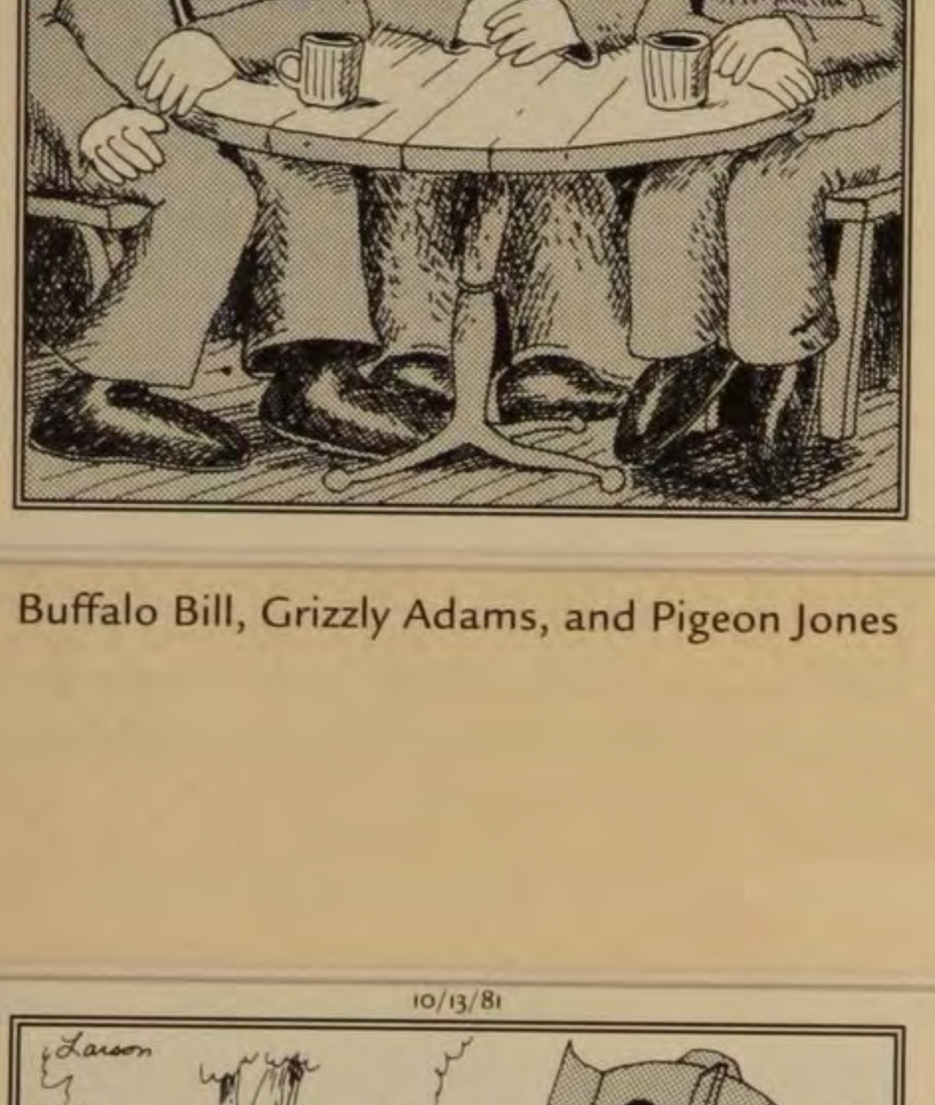
10/10/81

"It's still hungry ... and I've been stuffing worms into it all day."

October 1981

Buffalo Bill, Grizzly Adams, and Pigeon Jones

"Sorry—Carl doesn't live here anymore."



"Let's not overreact, Agnes. ... For one thing, it was only a dud."

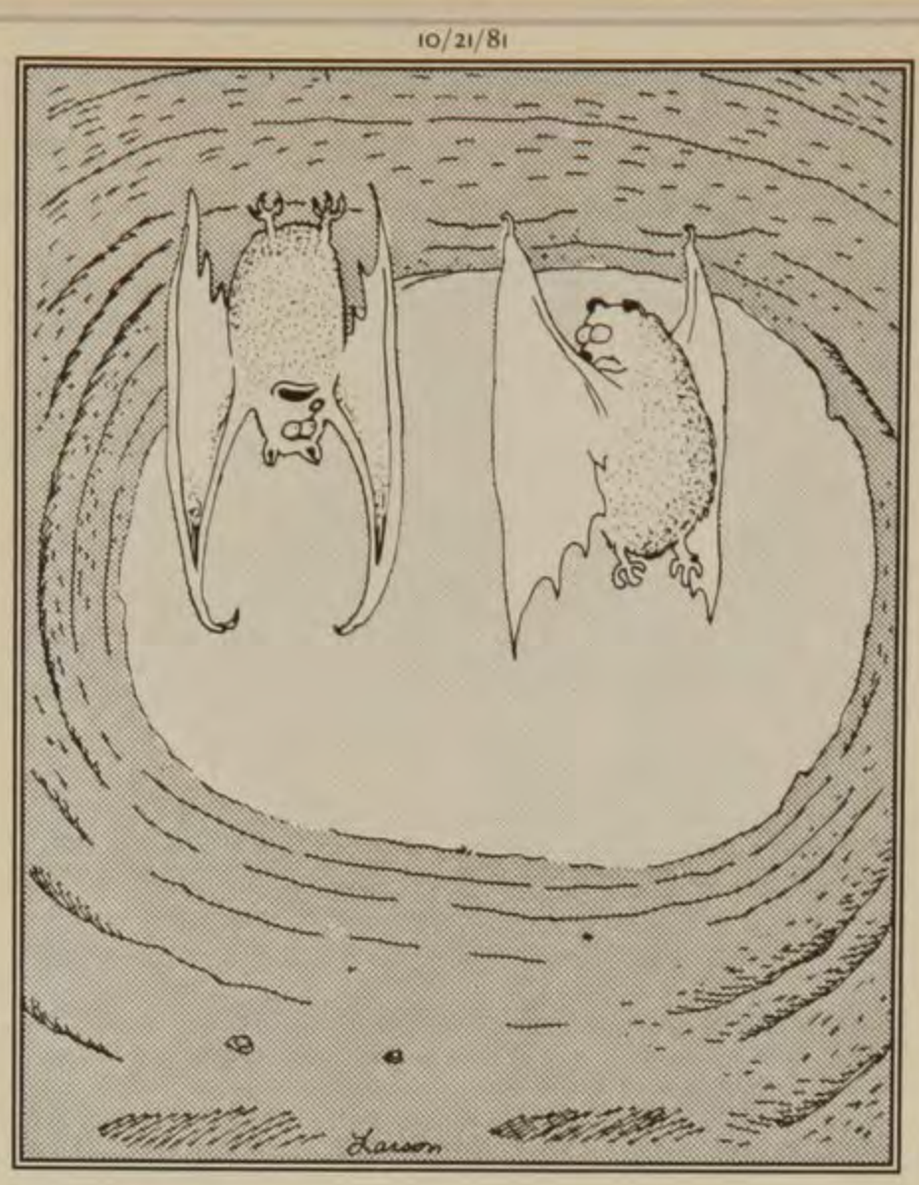
"This is Harold Schwartz! ... Something horrible is happening out here!"

October 1981

10/15/81

"Looks like this place has been pretty much sucked over."

10/21/81

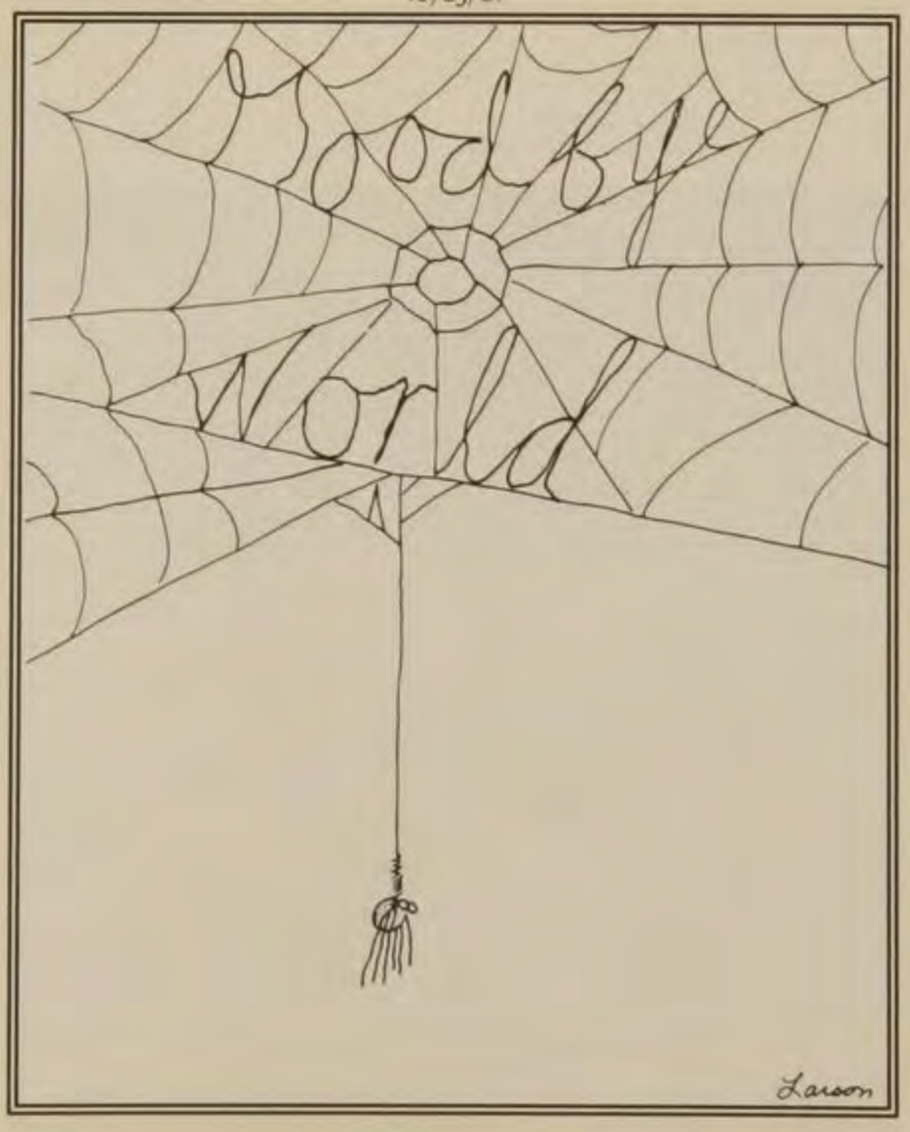


"Sure, go ahead—if you want the blood to rush to your feet."

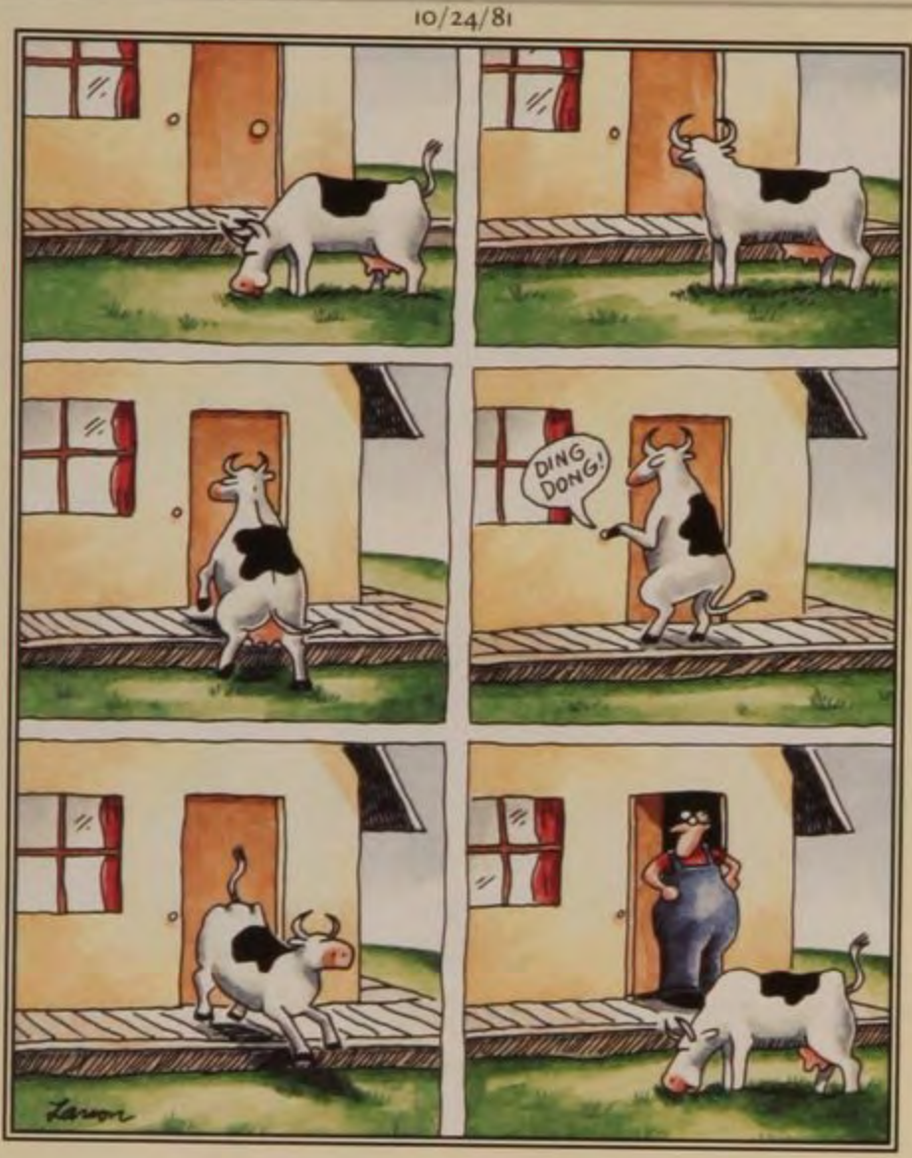
10/22/81

"Sidney, just take one—don't handle every fly."

10/23/81



October 1981

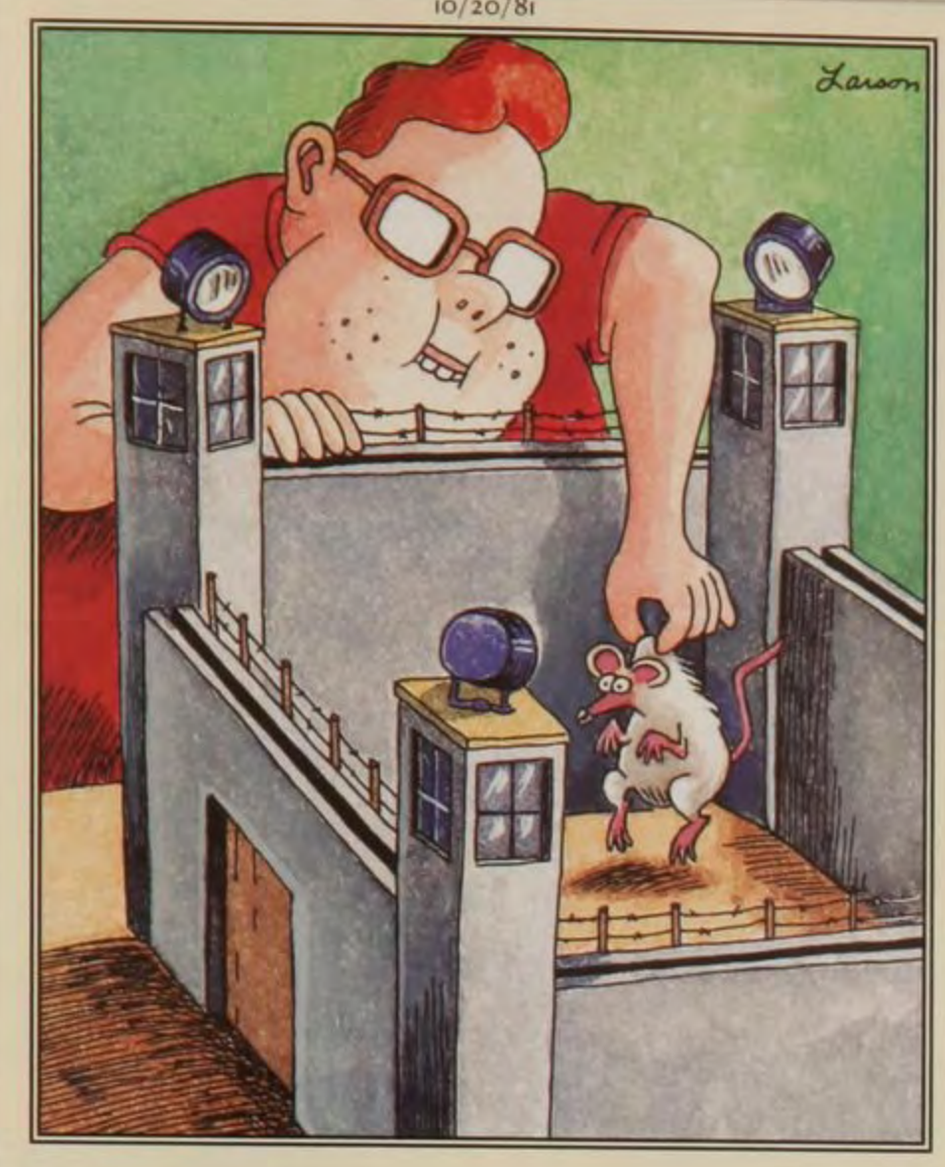


"C'mon! Look at these fangs! Look at these claws! You think we're supposed to eat just honey and berries?"

"Hey, wait a minute! This is grass! We've been eating grass!"

October 1981

10/20/81

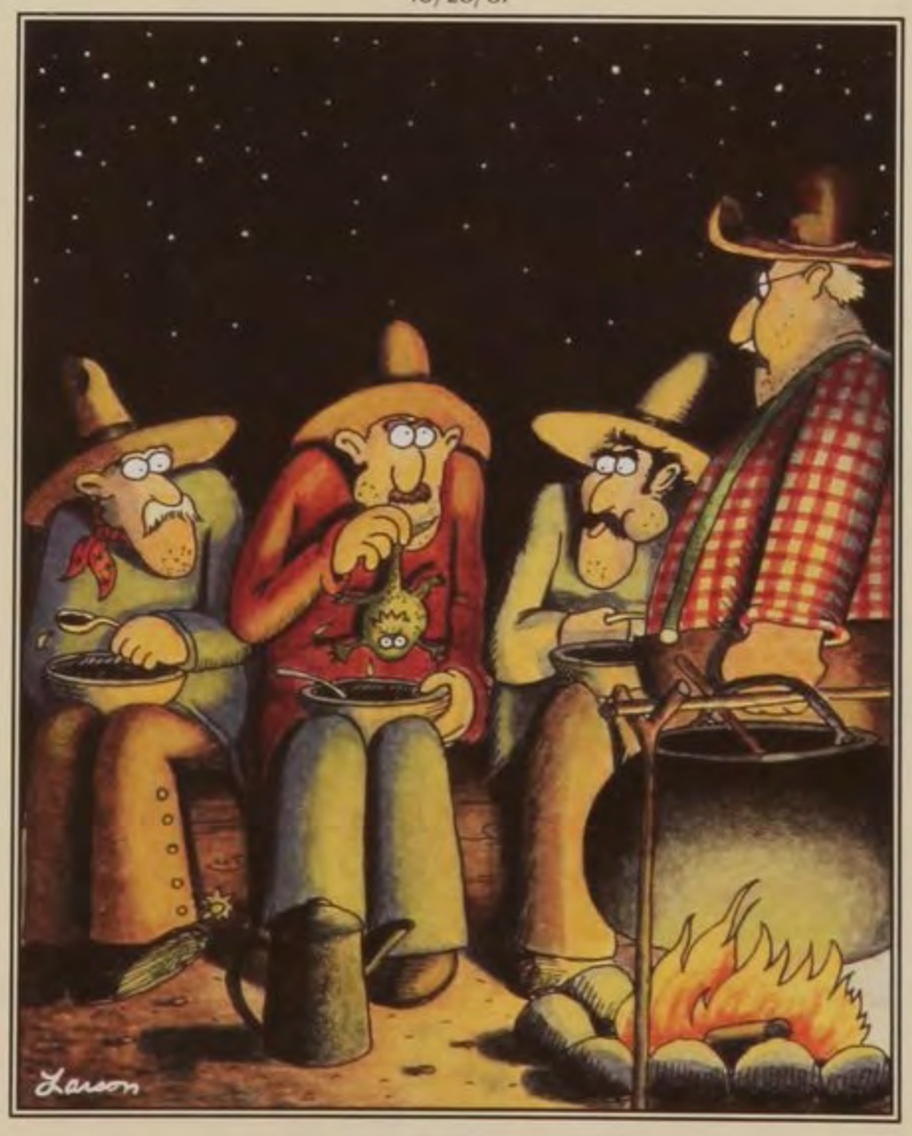


10/26/81

"CHARLEY HORSE!"

10/27/81

10/28/81



"Well, I'll be! Eggbeater must have missed that one."

October 1981

"Counterclockwise, Red Eagle!
Always counterclockwise!"

November 6, 1981

Gary Larson
C/O The Washington Post
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Mr. Larson:

I am an English teacher in the Waynesboro Area Senior High School. Recently one of my students came up with a question in a research class--and no one here can answer the question. This is the question:

> Why are all races (human and horse) run counter-clockwise around the track, rather than clockwise?

We have consulted all of the sources available and c_annot seem to come up with a satisfactory answer. Then, on October 29 the Post ran your "The Far Side" cartoon ("Counterclockwise, Red Eagle! Always counterclockwise!") and we are terribly curious to know where you got the idea for this.

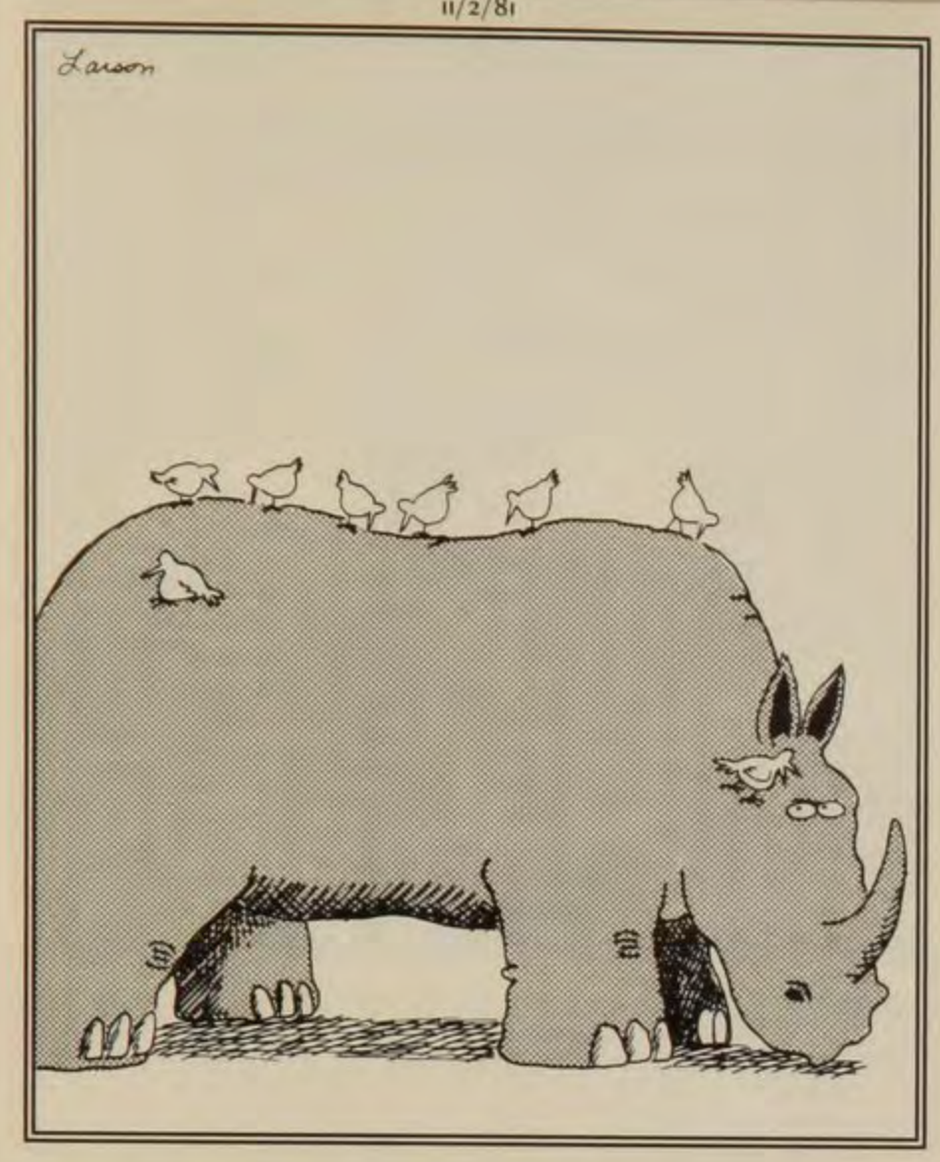
Could you help us, please? Thank you so very much.

Yours truly,

Mary Ann M. Kulp

November 1981

11/2/81



"Mind if we check the ears?"

11/3/81

11/4/81

"I dreamt last night I was walking. ... And I mean I could walk anywhere ... fast, slow ..."

11/7/81

November 1981

11/5/81

"You meathead! Now watch! ... The rabbit goes through the hole, around the tree five or six times ..."

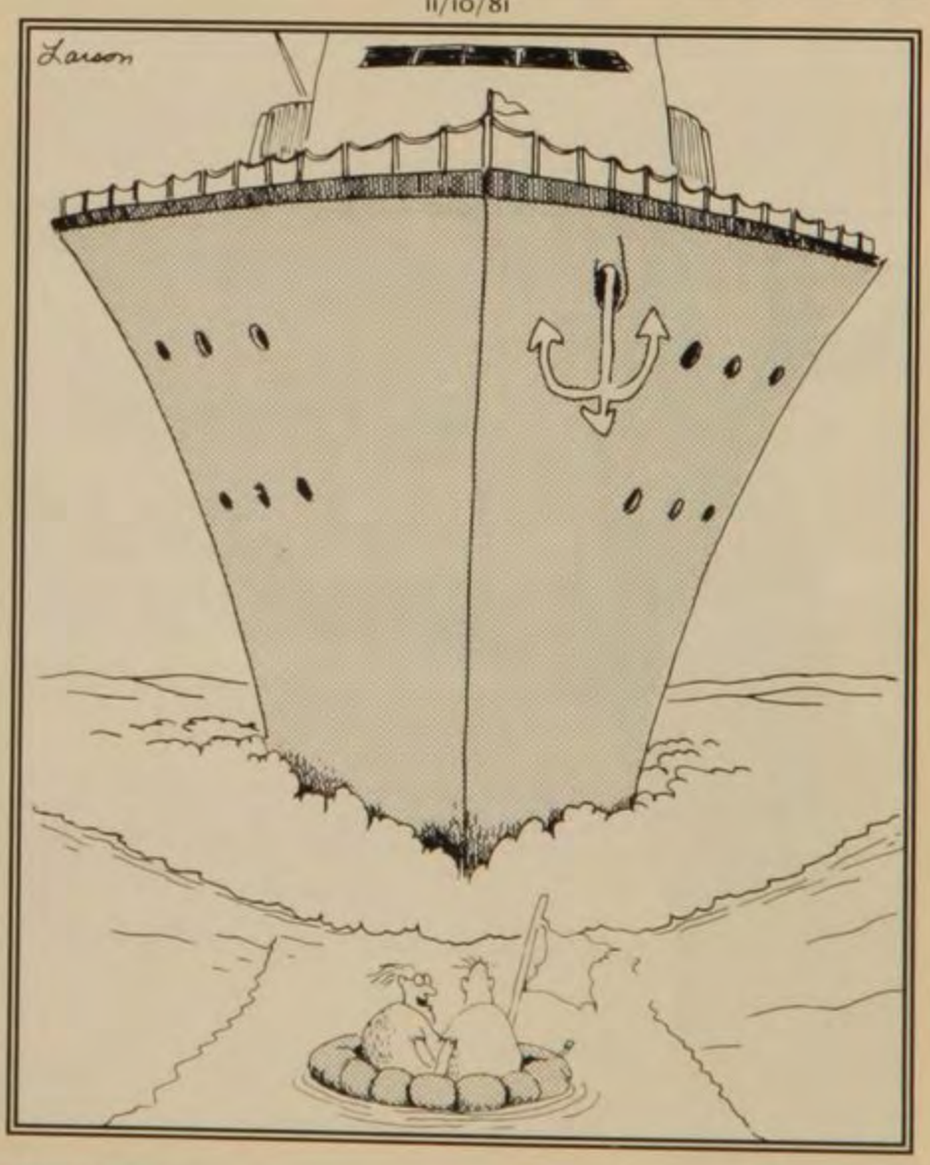
11/6/81

"We've made it, Warren! ... The moon!"

11/9/81

"Get it off me! Get it off me!"

11/10/81



"Thank goodness, Malcolm! We've finally been spotted!"

November 1981

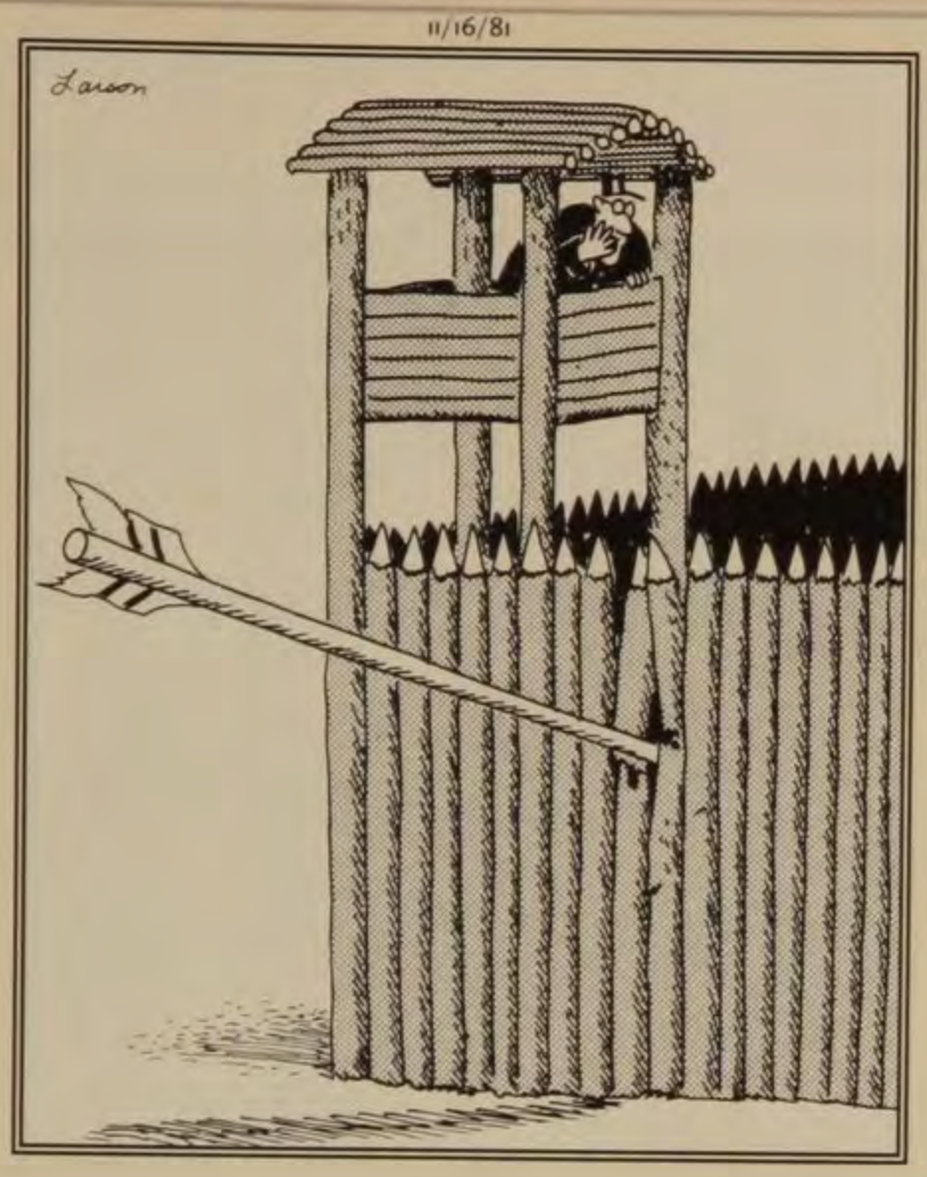
"Bozo? Did you hear that?
She called me a bozo!"

"Stop! Stop! What's that sound?
What's that sound?"

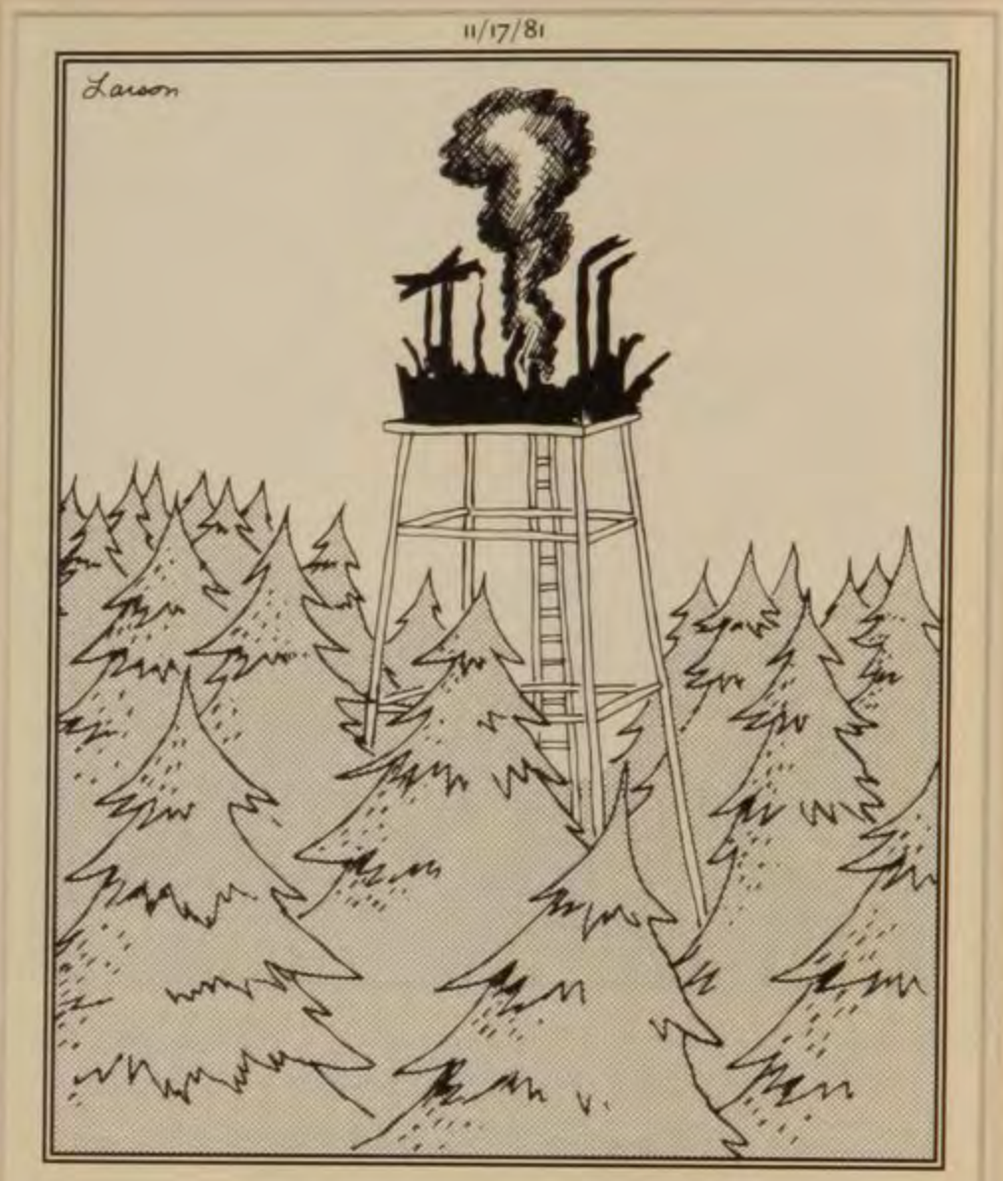
"Yes, yes ... now don't fuss. ... I have
something for you all."

"You imbecile! We flew 12,000
miles for THIS?"

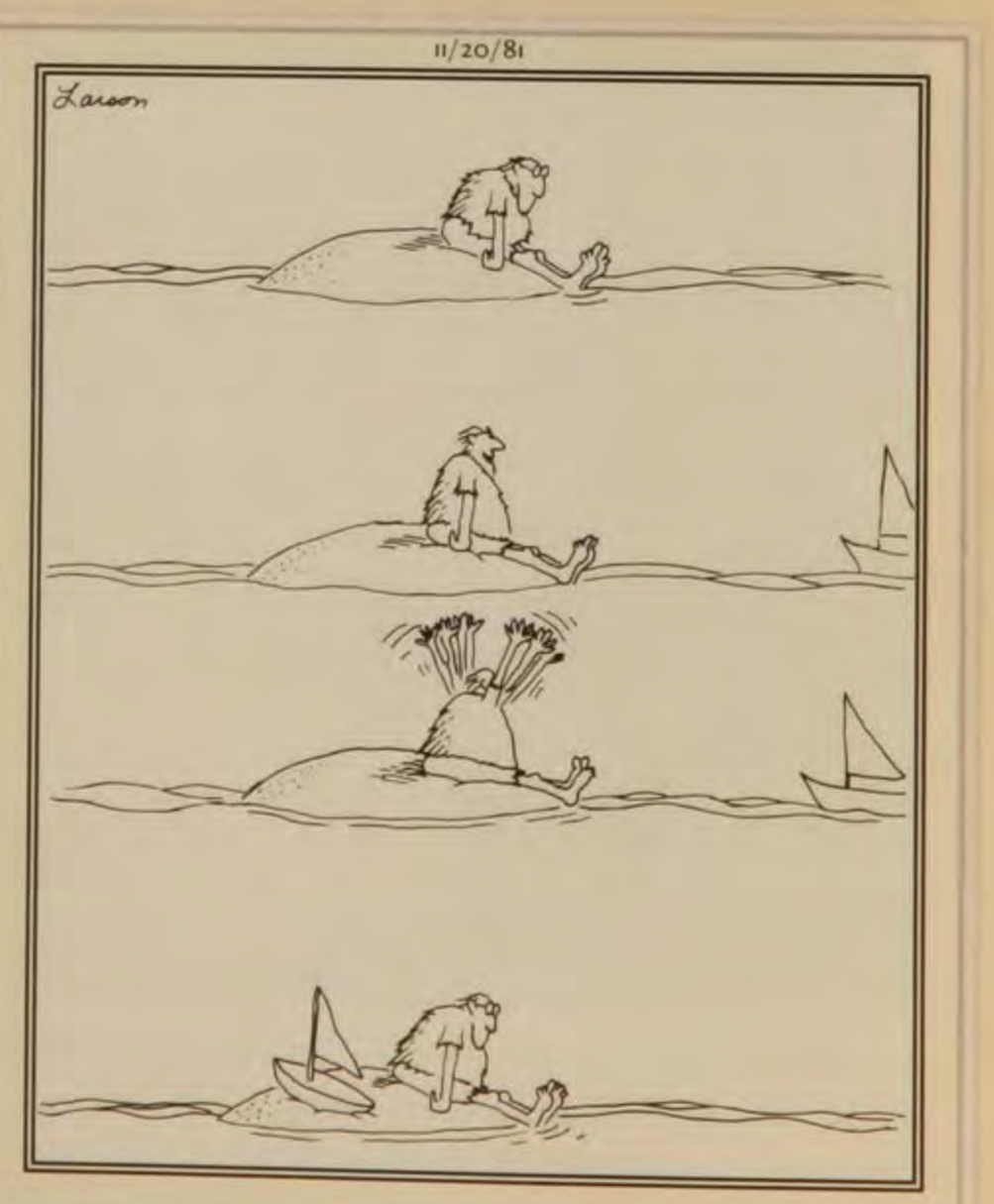
November 1981



"First the good news, sir! ... I count only one Indian!"



"Uh-oh! It says here: 'A good mimic, this bird should not be exposed to foul or abusive sounds.'"



November 1981

"Something's wrong here, Harriet. This is starting to look less and less like Interstate 95."

November 1981

11/21/81

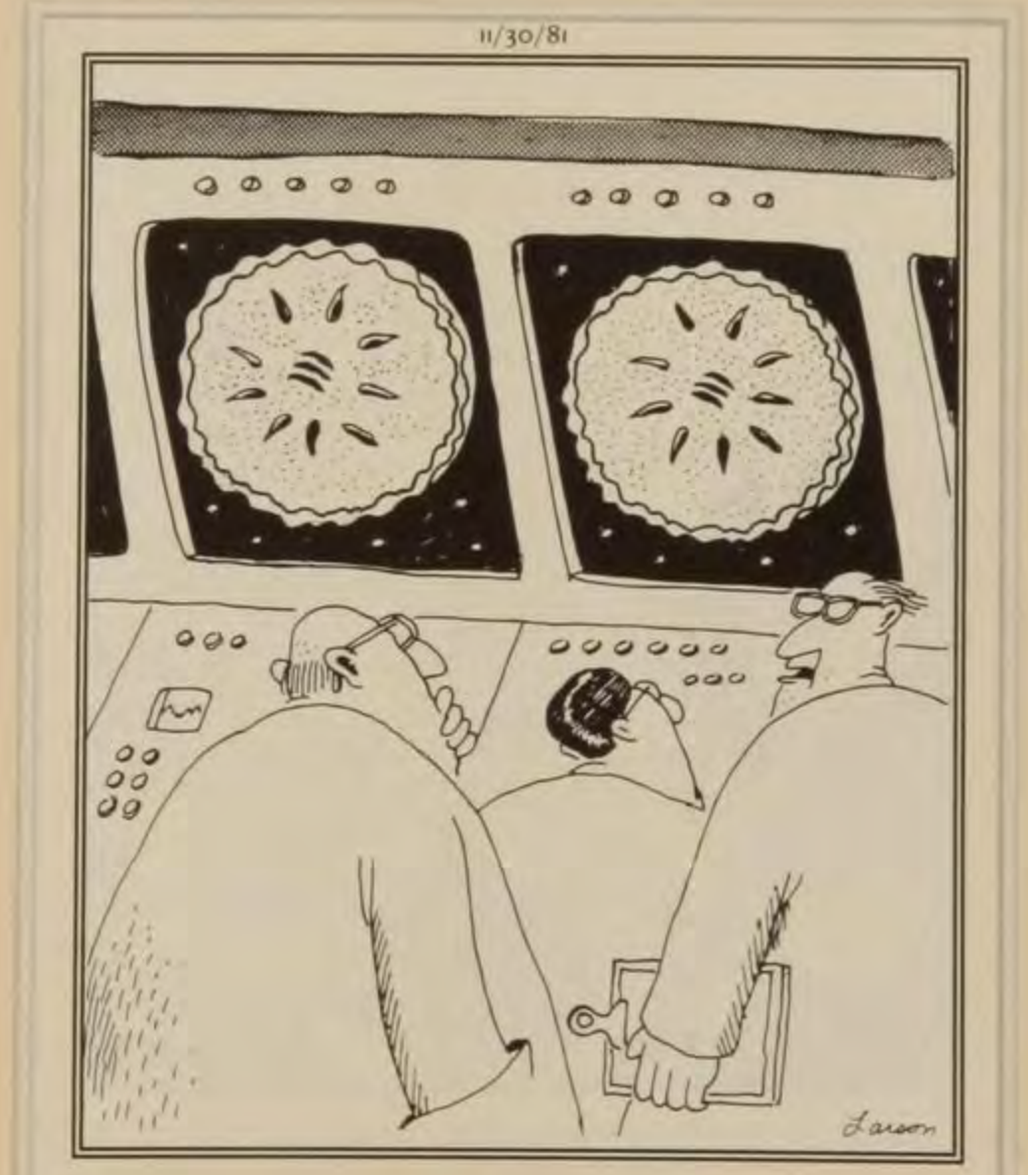
11/23/81

11/24/81

11/25/81

"FIND THEM!"

November 1981



"We estimate it to be 7,000 kilometers in diameter, 130,000 kilometers away—and we're on a collision course!"

December 1981

"Fair is fair, Larry. ... We're out of food, we drew straws—you lost."

"Harry! I found this note from Mary Beth! ... She's run off with a spoon!"

"Ha! I knew you were bluffing, Amos! You never did have much of a poker face!"

December 1981

"Say ... maybe it's not just a bad swarm of horseflies."

Comics Editor
Minneapolis Tribune
Minneapolis, Minnesota

I am quite liberal when it comes to various types of comics and even go so far as to enjoy the cartoons and jokes in magazines like Playboy and High Society.

But I must strongly protest the cartoon; The Far Side, by Gary Larson. A sample is attached.

Larson has some kind of sickness in that he has to portray animals in some kind of suffering situation. I think we have enough people in the world who inflict pain on helpless animals and we don't have to encourage this craziness on the comic pages.

I am able to accept comics that deal with people-to-people violence simply because people have some control over how they may or may not feel toward each other. I cannot stomach the violence of people against animals who have no way of knowing when danger is imminent.

The Minneapolis Tribune should drop The Far Side until Gary Larson completes psychotherapy to overcome his problem. The Far Side does not represent humor. It represents illness.

Please send Gary Larson a copy of this letter. He needs to know that a whole lot of people don't think he's funny.

Thanks very much.

R. E. Enger
Minneapolis

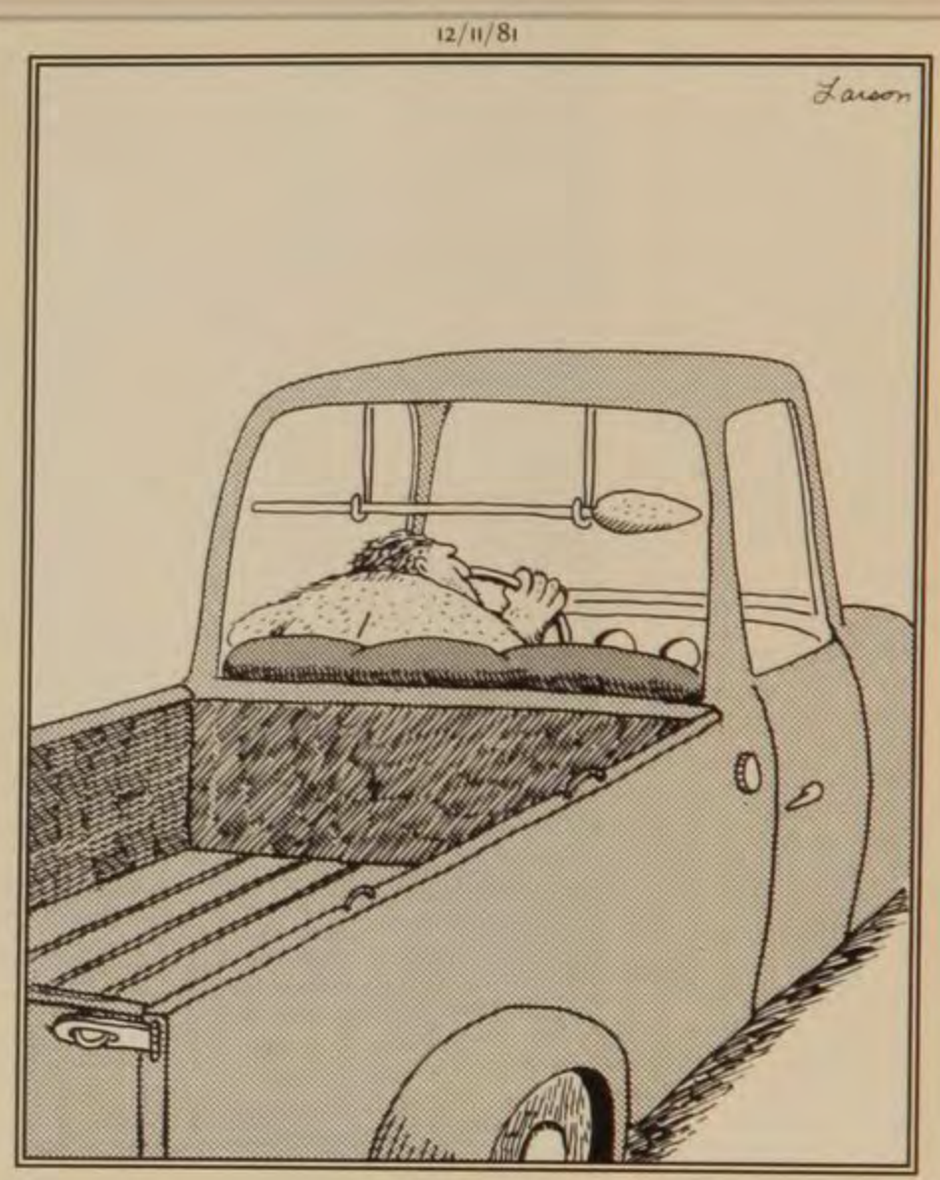
P.S. I should add that the Minneapolis Tribune comic page is excellent (expect for an occasional Far Side) and urge you not to eliminate any of its other fine comics.

December 1981

12/7/81

"So ... you must be the one they call Mr. Long."

12/11/81



12/8/81

"Thank God, Sylvia! We're alive!"

12/9/81

"Okay, buddy. Then how 'bout the right arm?"

December 1981

12/14/81

"Rejected again, huh Murray? Have you heard about this new breath-freshening toothpaste?"

12/10/81

"Hey! Look what Zog do!"

12/12/81

12/15/81

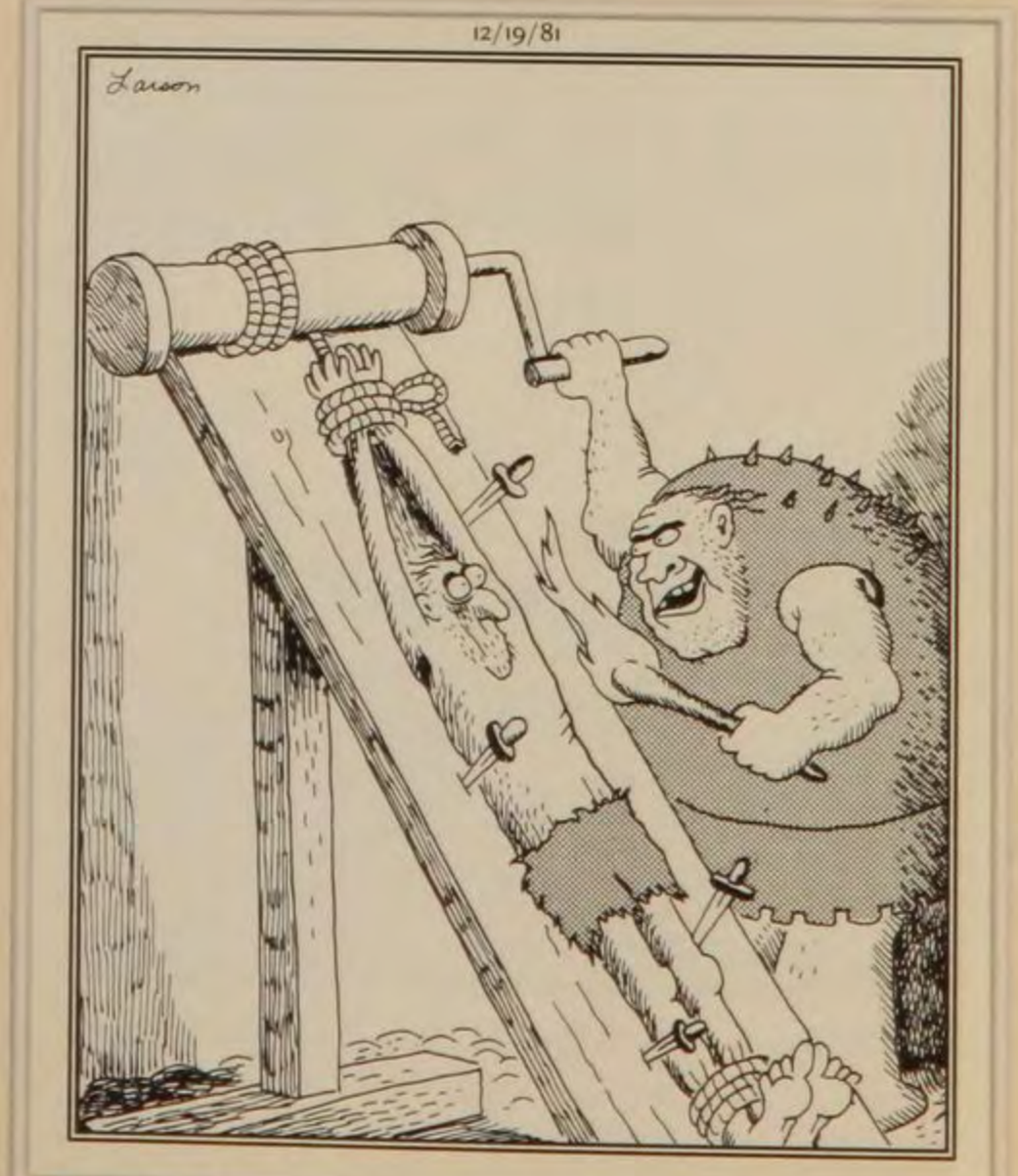
"Excuse me, Harold, while I go slip into something more comfortable."

December 1981

Near Gettysburg,1863: A reflective moment

"Wouldn't you know it! Now the Hendersons have the bomb."

The wereduck cometh.



"Still won't talk, huh? ... Okay, no more Mr. Nice Guy."

December 1981

12/22/81

"My goodness, Mr. Osgood! Your X-ray reveals several stethoscopes, a smock, and ..."

12/21/81

"Uh-oh, Stan. I guess it *wasn't* a big, blue mule deer."

12/25/81

12/30/81

"Well, that does it! ... Tomorrow he dies."

December 1981

12/23/81

"Ooo! Ow! Blast it, Phyllis! ... Hurry up with them hot pads!"

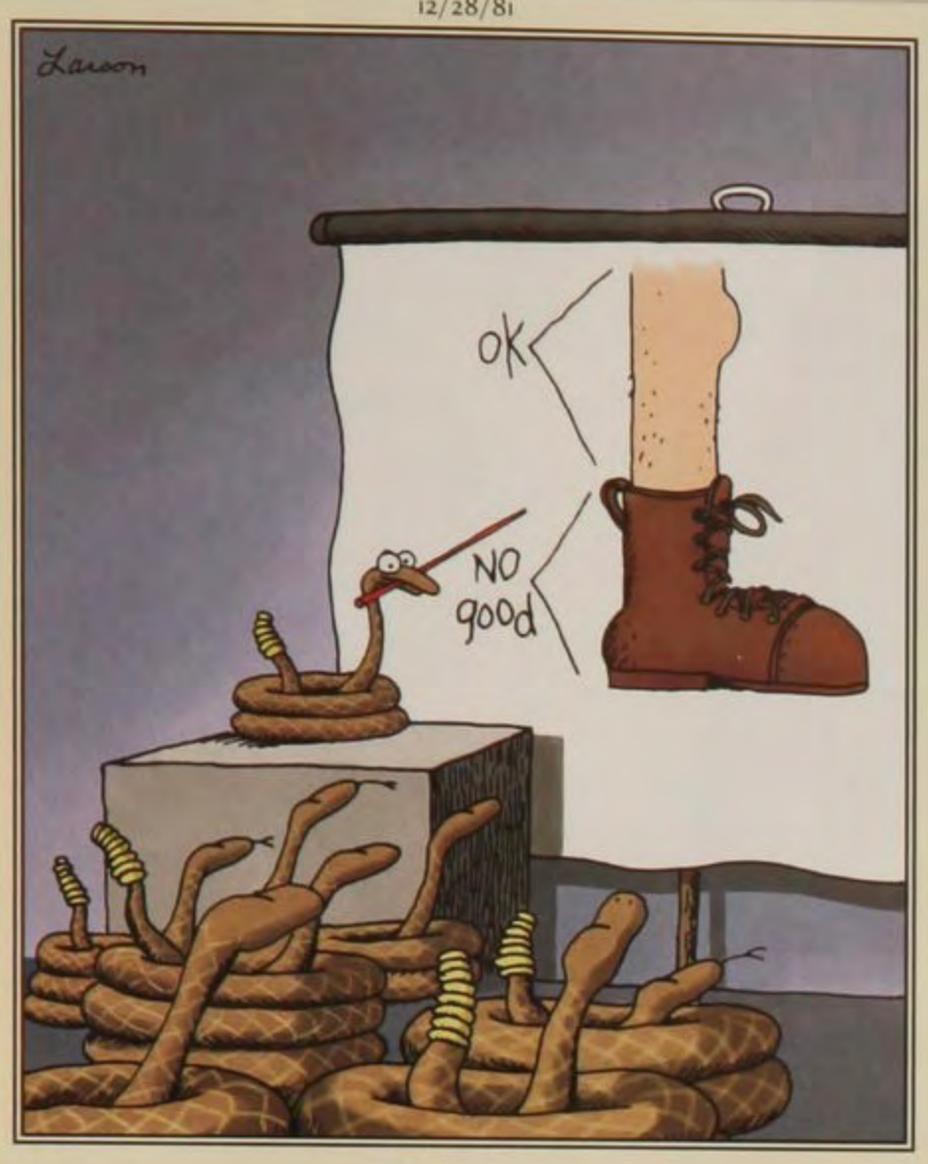
12/26/81

12/24/81

"Hello, I'm Clarence Jones from Bill's office and ... Oh! Hey! Mistletoe!"

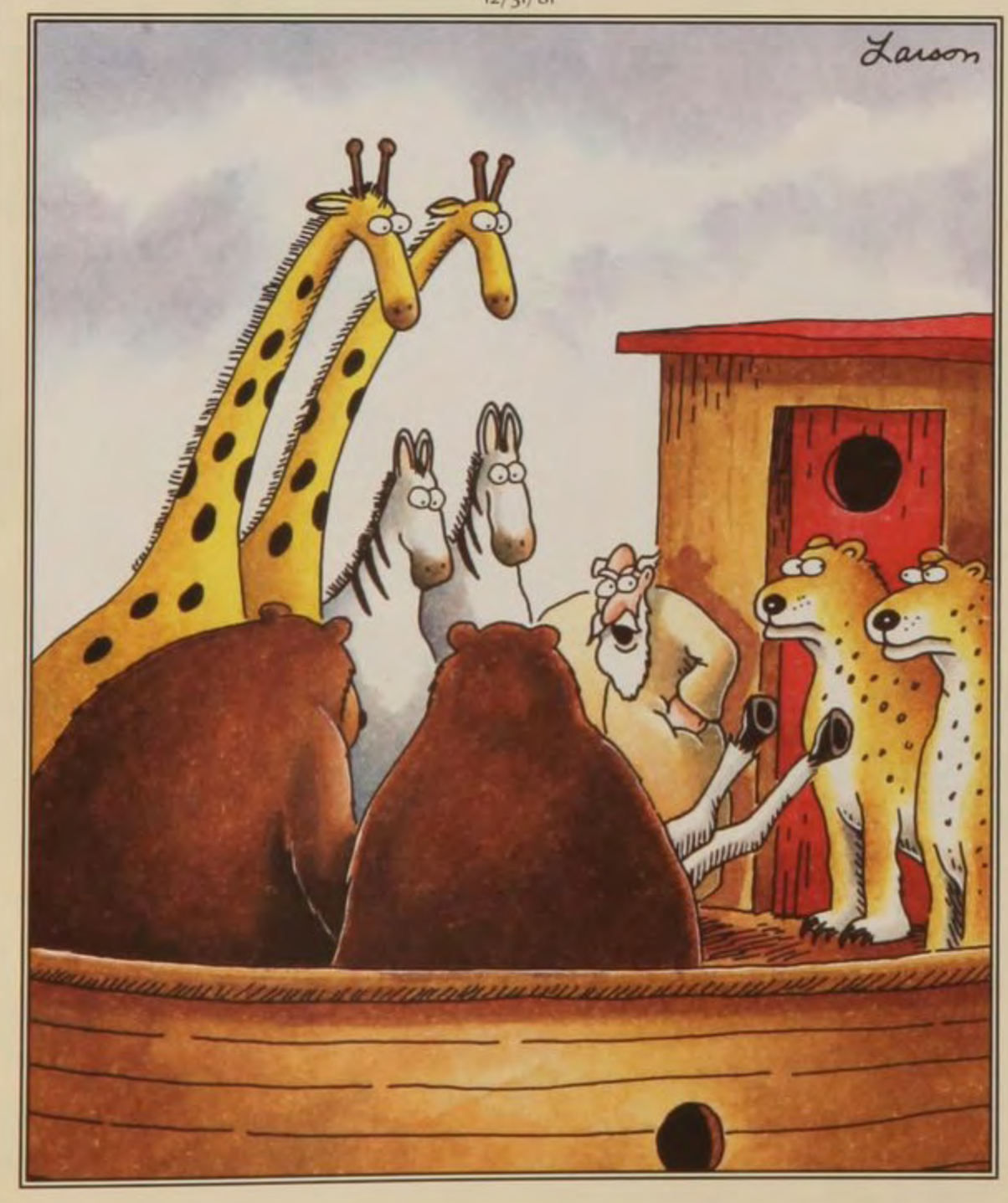
December 1981

12/28/81



12/29/81

12/31/81



"Well, so much for the unicorns. ... But, from now on, all carnivores will be confined to 'C' deck."

The Syndrome

The last time it struck me was a few years ago, while my wife and I were on vacation in Indonesia. Frankly, my syndrome hadn't surfaced for years, and up until this rather embarrassing "Bali episode," I had foolishly thought I was completely free of its grip.

I had just left the Hotel Bali Oberoi's outdoor bar and was heading back to our "hut," bearing a couple of those tropical drinks that look like someone had stuffed a clown into a blender. Just then, across the beautifully landscaped grounds, maybe a hundred feet from where I stood, strolled an enormous black lizard, perhaps three feet in length.

Outwardly, I was calm. Inwardly, I was completely undone. I put the drinks down on the lawn and immediately started moving toward this mysterious reptile. (Some kind of monitor lizard, I later determined.) And as it kept a watchful eye on me, maintaining a constant distance, I started moving a little faster. As did the lizard. As did I. Within a few minutes I was running full out, dodging palm trees and startled tourists. I was focused on that lizard, that big, beautiful, scaly creature of my dreams.

Hello to my little problem. Or, as my brother (who was also doomed to suffer under its spell) and I "scientifically" designated it, the *ohplease-ohplease syndrome*. For both of us, it first showed up in childhood.

On any given day or night, under optimum conditions (no school, essentially), Dan and I would gather up our boots, nets, and collecting jars and head for the local swamps or tidelands. We were on a quest for living treasure: the wetland fauna of western Washington.

Our passion for frequenting wetlands was not the syndrome per se: It was merely setting the stage. The syndrome itself, however, was always waiting in the wings, ready to pounce. Allow me to put you in my boots, and I will attempt to walk you through a typical "episode" of *ohpleaseohplease*.

It's night. You are at the edge of a big swamp, wading through the muddy shallows, staying close to the reeds. Your trusty net is in one hand, your less trusty flashlight in the other. The only sounds you hear are frogs and occasionally creatures of unknown origin. Your flashlight sweeps back and forth in a slow, smooth arc, its beam searching for denizens of the not-so-deep. And then … your heart nearly stops. You can barely breathe. There, not far from where you stand frozen, illuminated in your light beam, is the most beautiful, the most incredible _____(fill in the creature of your own dreams) that you have ever laid eyes on! Now the syndrome kicks in.

For a while, you dare not move. But soon you find yourself moving (or is it being "pulled"?) in slow motion toward this beautiful, amazing _____ . And as you raise your net into capture position with the practiced skill of an Amazonian Indian (wearing glasses), knowing that at any moment the _____ might realize your intent and instantly vanish, you hear, over and over again, a single voice pounding in your head: *ohpleaseohplease!* It's an all-out begging of the gods to deliver yonder animal unto thy net. And while that voice implores away inside your brain, you experience a total eclipse of everything else in the known universe. All you see is that amazing, beautiful, incredible _____ that's staring back at you.

Like a full moon shining down on some werewolf, that huge lizard in Bali had triggered my own curse. I *wanted* that lizard. I *had* to have that lizard. I *lusted* after that lizard!

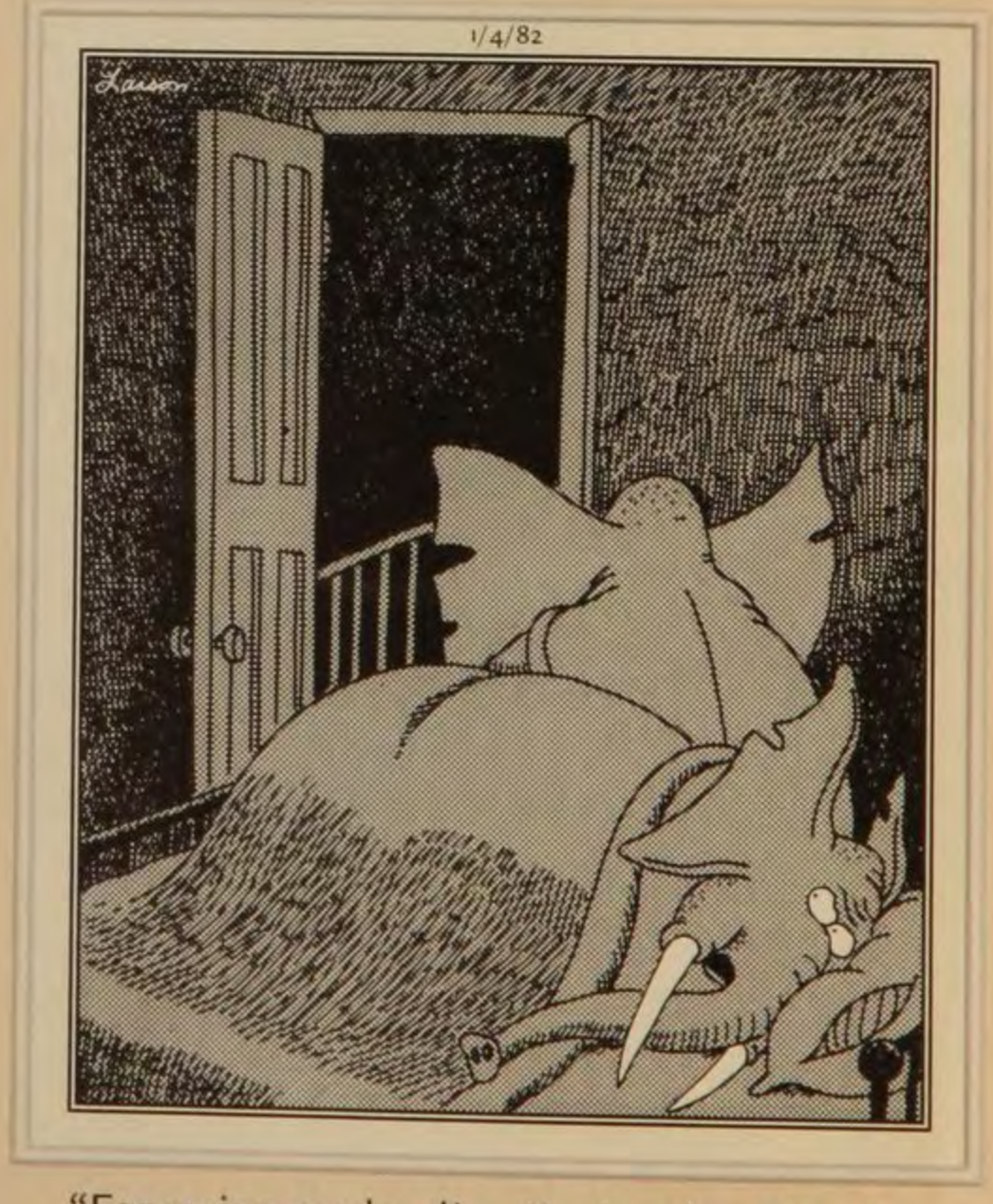
In the end, that big reptile just ran into some bushes. Gone like a lizard. And so there I stood, drenched in sweat—the only tell-tale sign that I had just experienced another attack of *ohpleaseohplease.*

Years ago, my brother and I concluded we were probably not alone with our affliction. Biologists, naturalists, all people who find themselves inexplicably drawn to look under rocks, down holes, up trees, under water, or wherever else you might discover some beautiful beastie, must also suffer from bouts of *ohpleaseohplease*. Very simply, it's the obsession to capture and to hold, if only for a few moments, some living, natural wonder, to observe it, examine it, have it touch your skin, feel its heartbeat against your hand—to "drink it in" before it once again slips back over that invisible wall that separates Us from Them.

Whether directly or indirectly, the memory of *ohpleaseohplease* was the genesis for a number of my cartoons. I guess in the end, you are what you draw. A scary thought.

"Eaaaaaasy, Smithers! ... Eaaaaasy ... Oh please, oh please!"

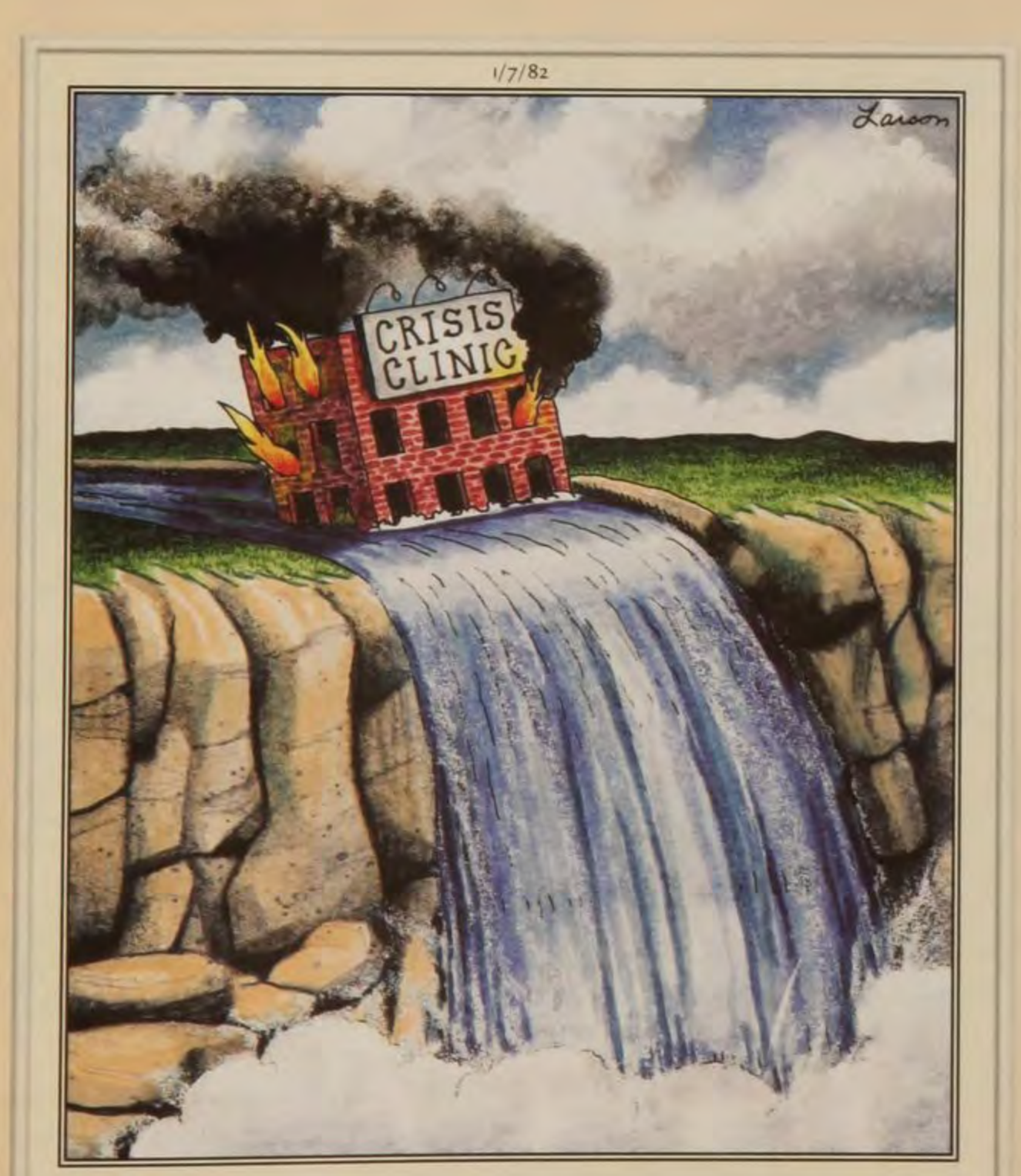
January 1982



"For crying out loud! ... You're *always* hearing something moving around downstairs!"

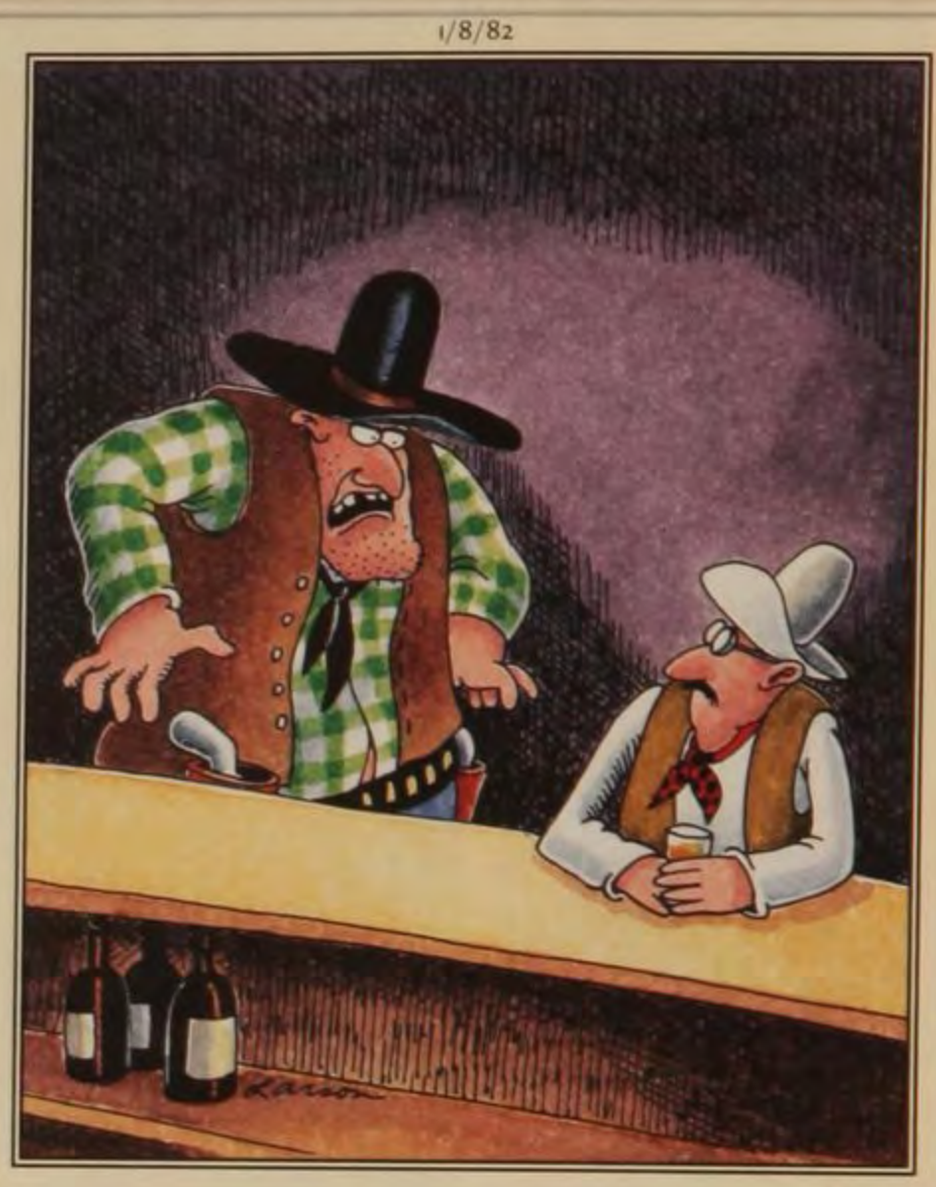
January 1982

"Shove off, buddy ... I've been working this neighborhood for years."

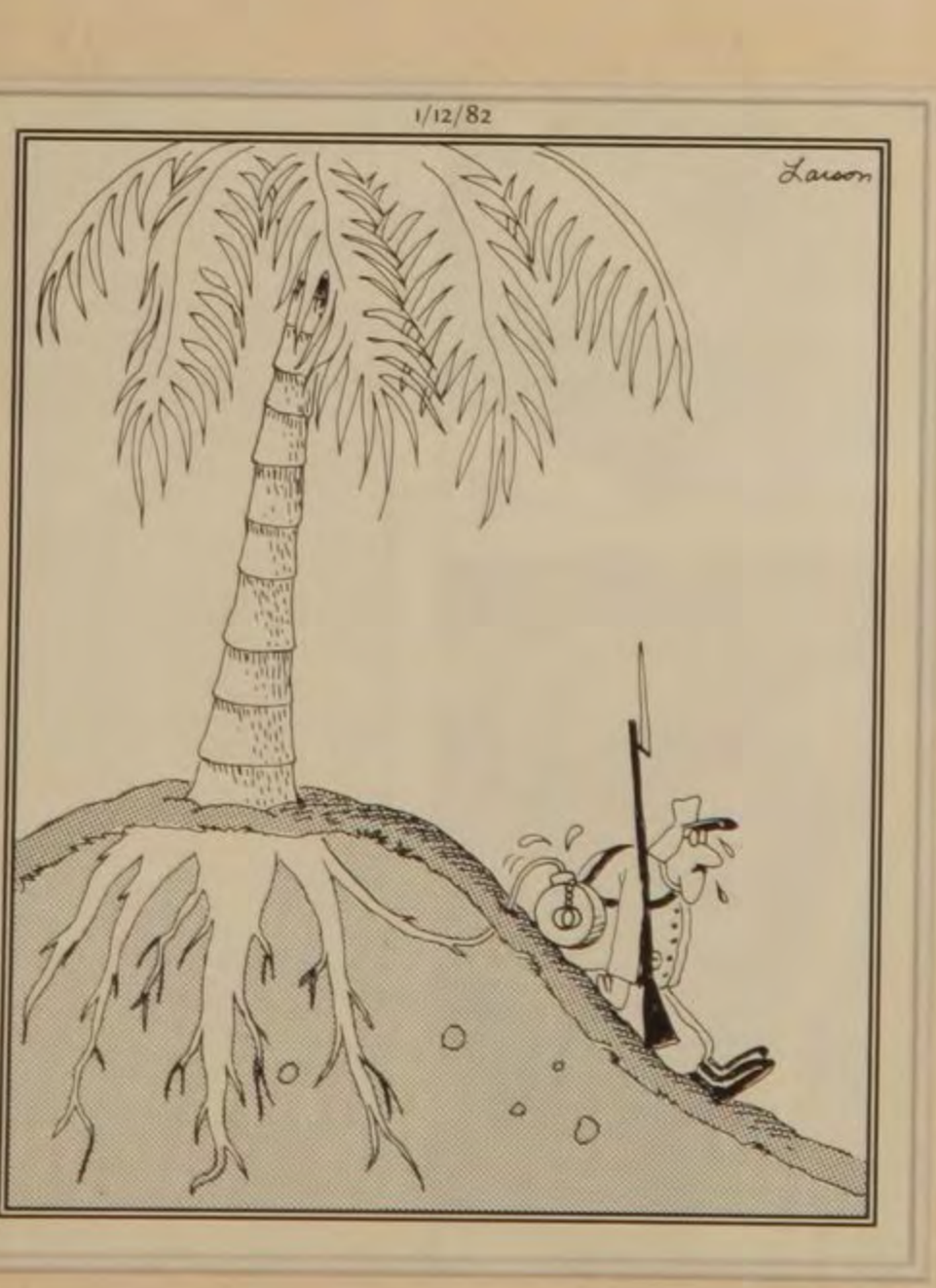


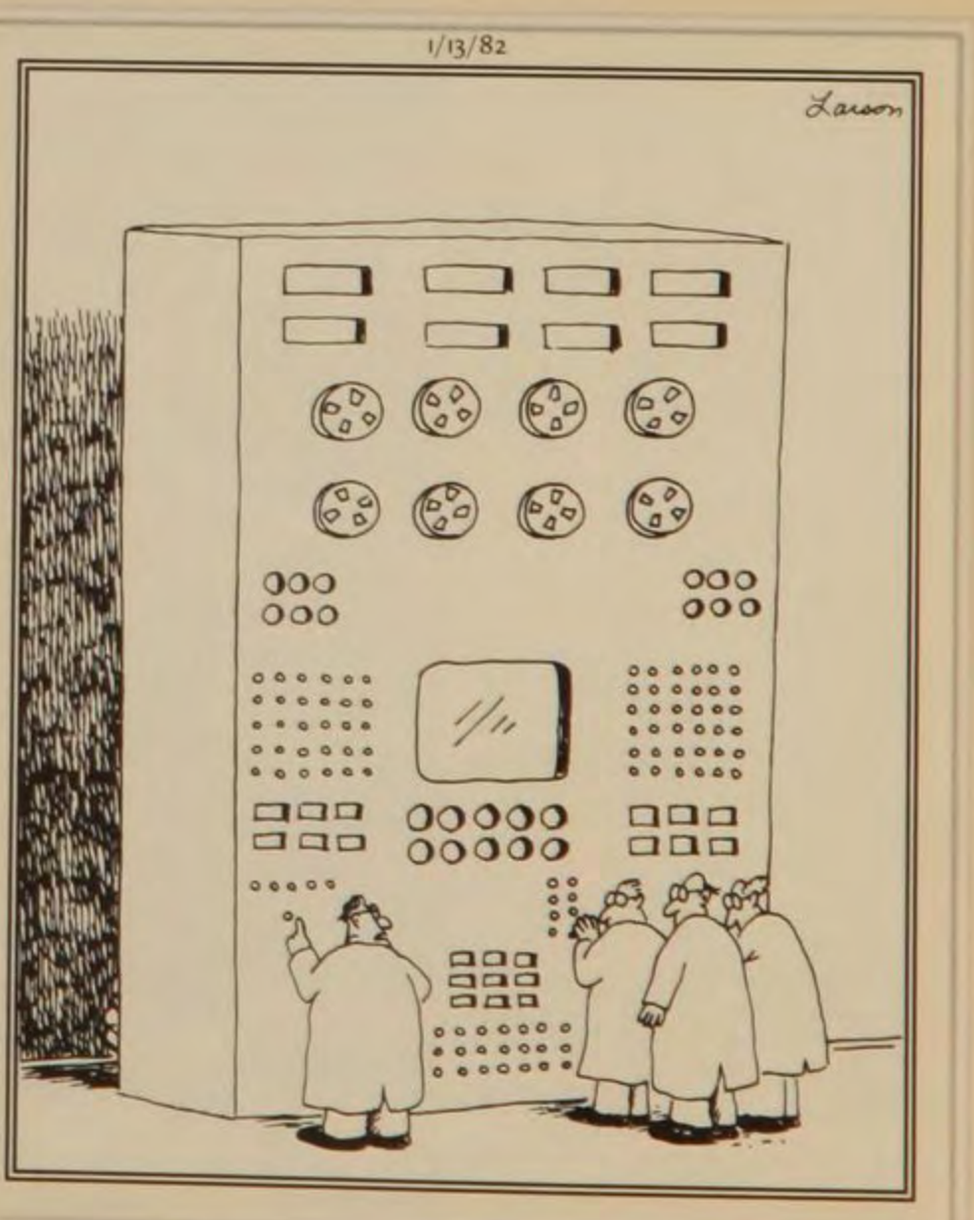
January 1982

"Mrs. Harriet Schwartz? This is Zathu Nananga of the Masai. ... Are you missing a little boy, Mrs. Schwartz?"



"I *asked* you a question, buddy. ... What's the square root of 5,248?"





"Wait a minute, gentlemen. ... Here's the 'on' switch over here."

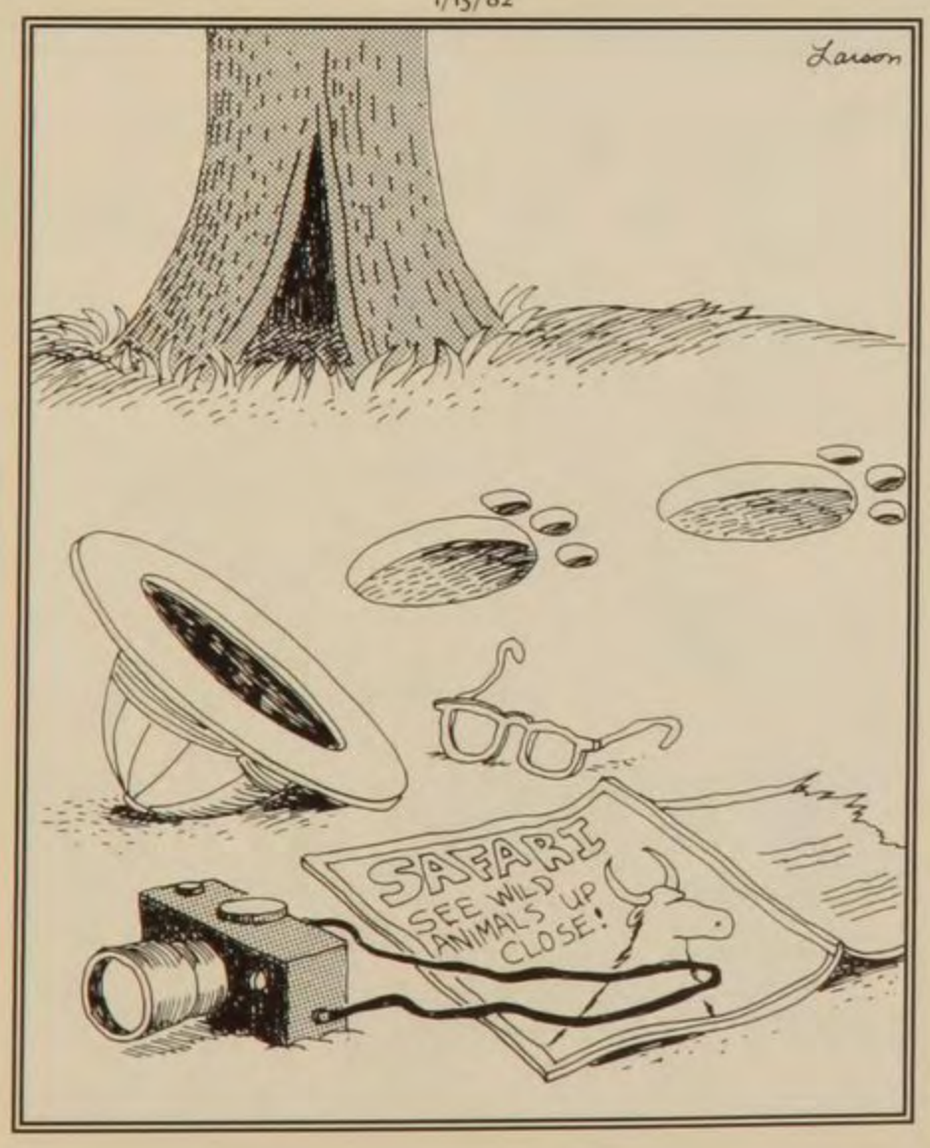
January 1982

1/14/82

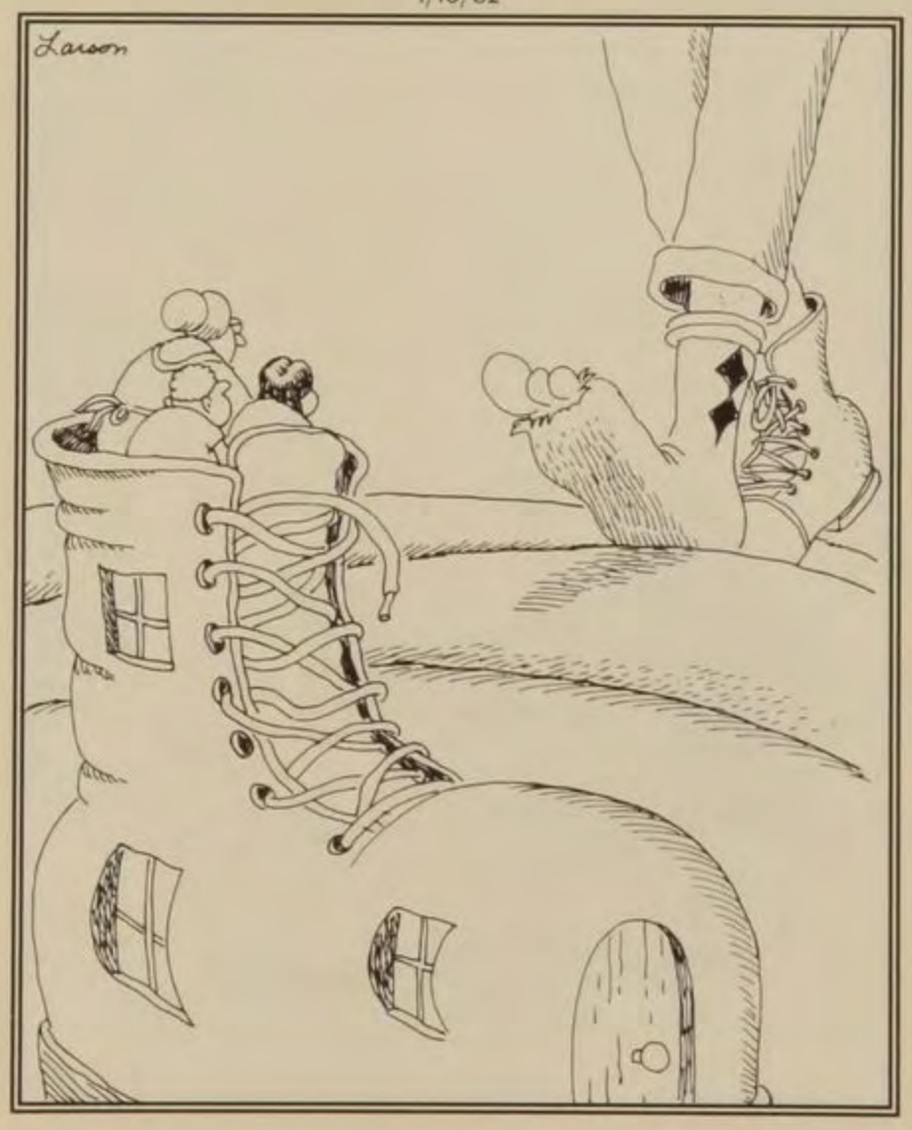
"Why, yes ... we do have two children who won't eat their vegetables."

1/11/82

1/15/82



1/16/82

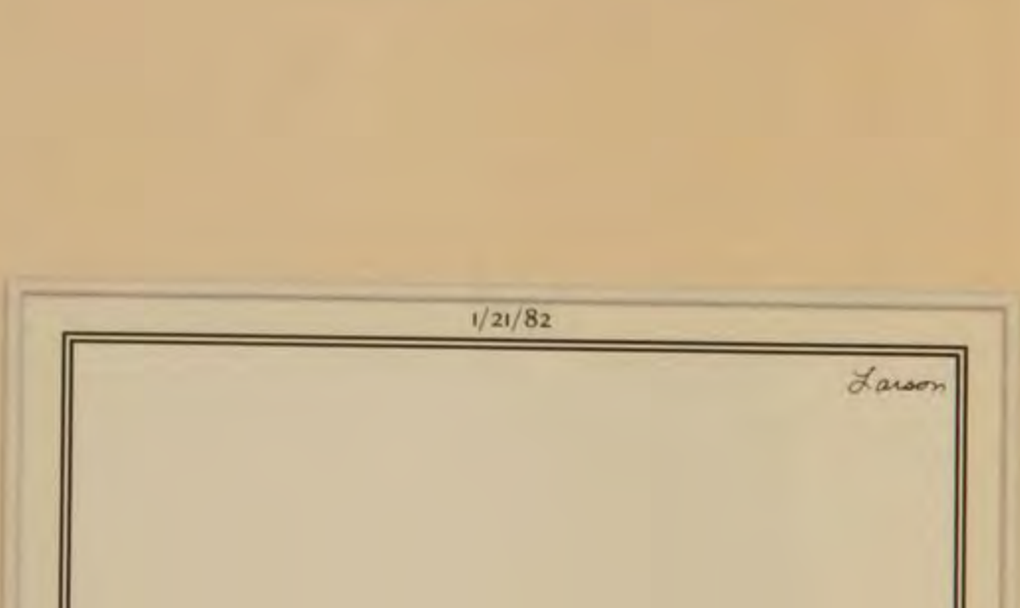


January 1982

"This is just not effective. ... We need to get some chains."

"Hathunters!"

"I can't stand it. ... They're so *cute* when they sit like that."



Africa's deadliest game

January 1982

1/23/82

1/25/82

"Hey, buddy ... you wanna buy a hoofed mammal?"

1/27/82

"Okay, Williams, we'll just vote. ... How many here say the heart has four chambers?"

1/28/82

"Okay, so you're Grizzly Adams. ... Let's see some proof!"

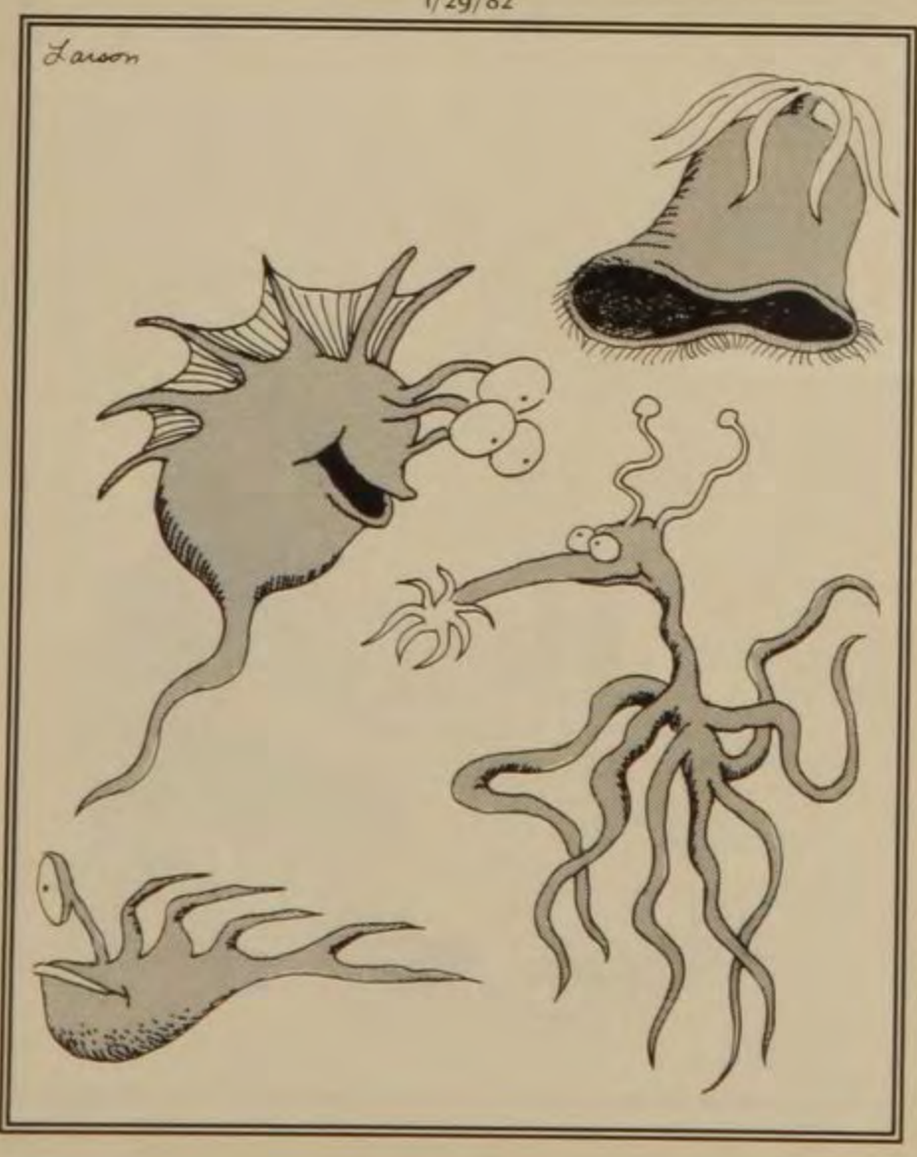
January 1982

1/22/82

1/26/82

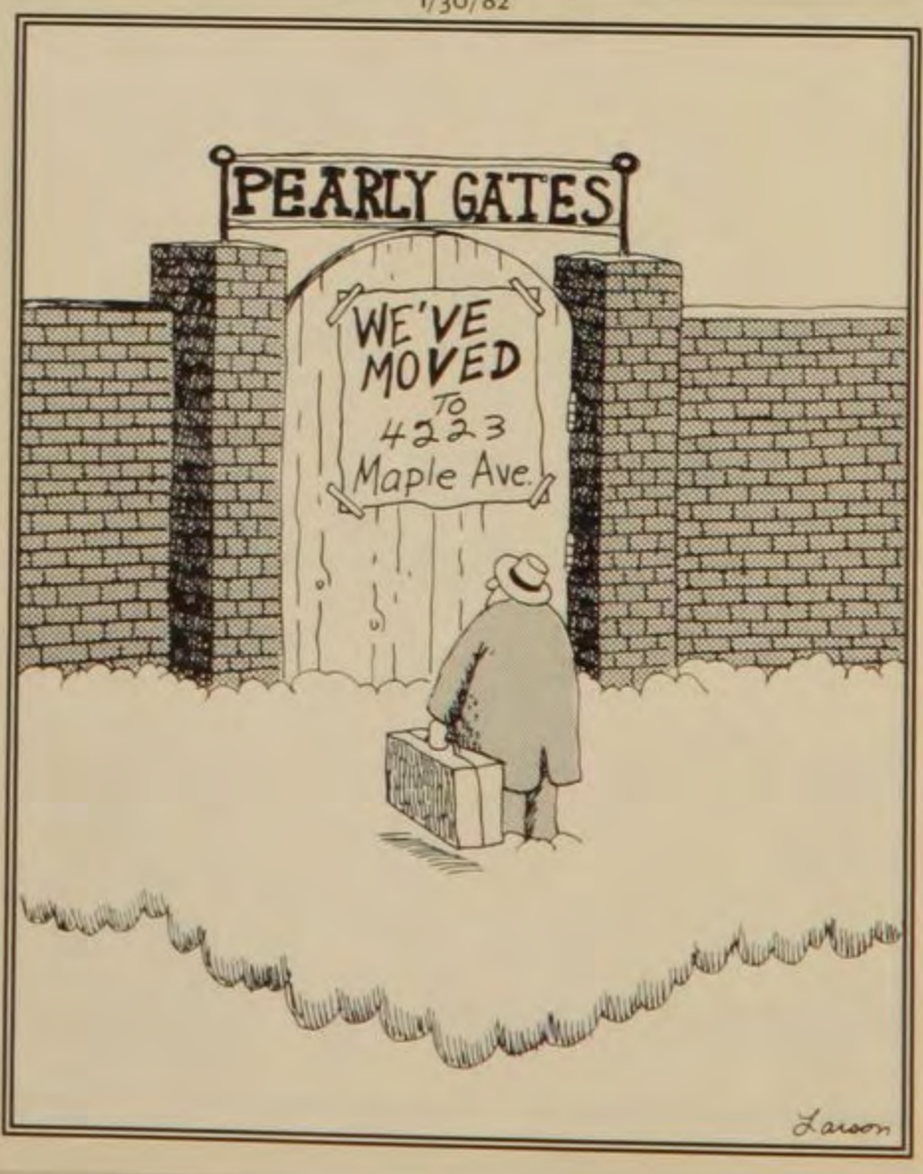
"These little ones are mice. ... These over here are hamsters. ... Ooh! This must be a gerbil!"

1/29/82



"Hey! Is that you, Arnie? ... Small petri dish!"

1/30/82



February 1982

"Now wait just a minute here. ... How are we supposed to know you're the *real* Angel of Death?"

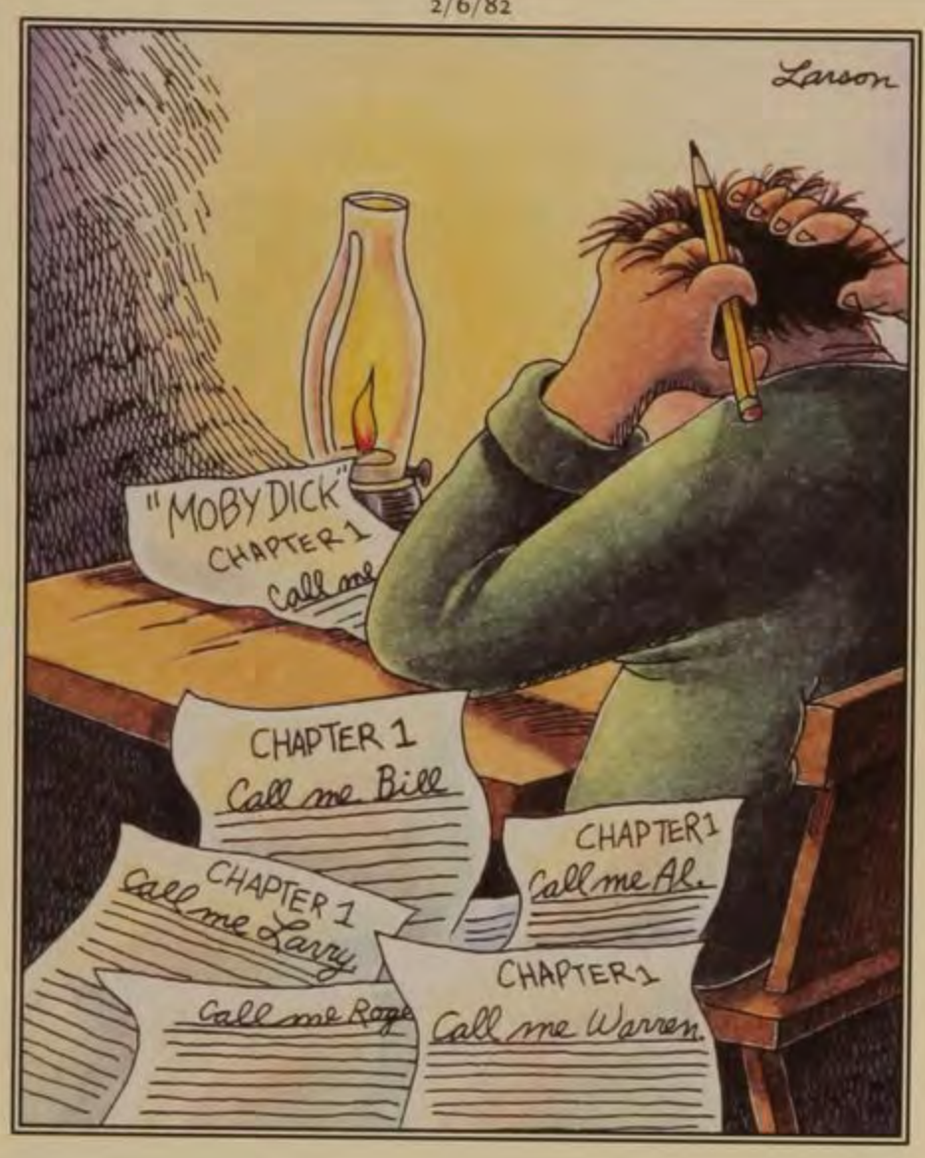
"Big one, Thag! ... We caught biiiiiig one!"

"Blast it, woman! ... Have you seen my reading glasses?"

"Millions of years old and they look as if they were laid yesterday!"

February 1982

2/6/82



2/8/82

"Your room is right in here, Maestro."

2/5/82

"Because it's not there."

2/9/82

"Yes. Will you accept a collect call from a Mr. Aaaaaaaaaa?"

February 1982

"Uh-oh, Gladys. ... Looks like your Sidney has had too much to drink again."

"Eaaaaaasy, Smithers! ... Eaaaaasy ... Oh please, oh please!"

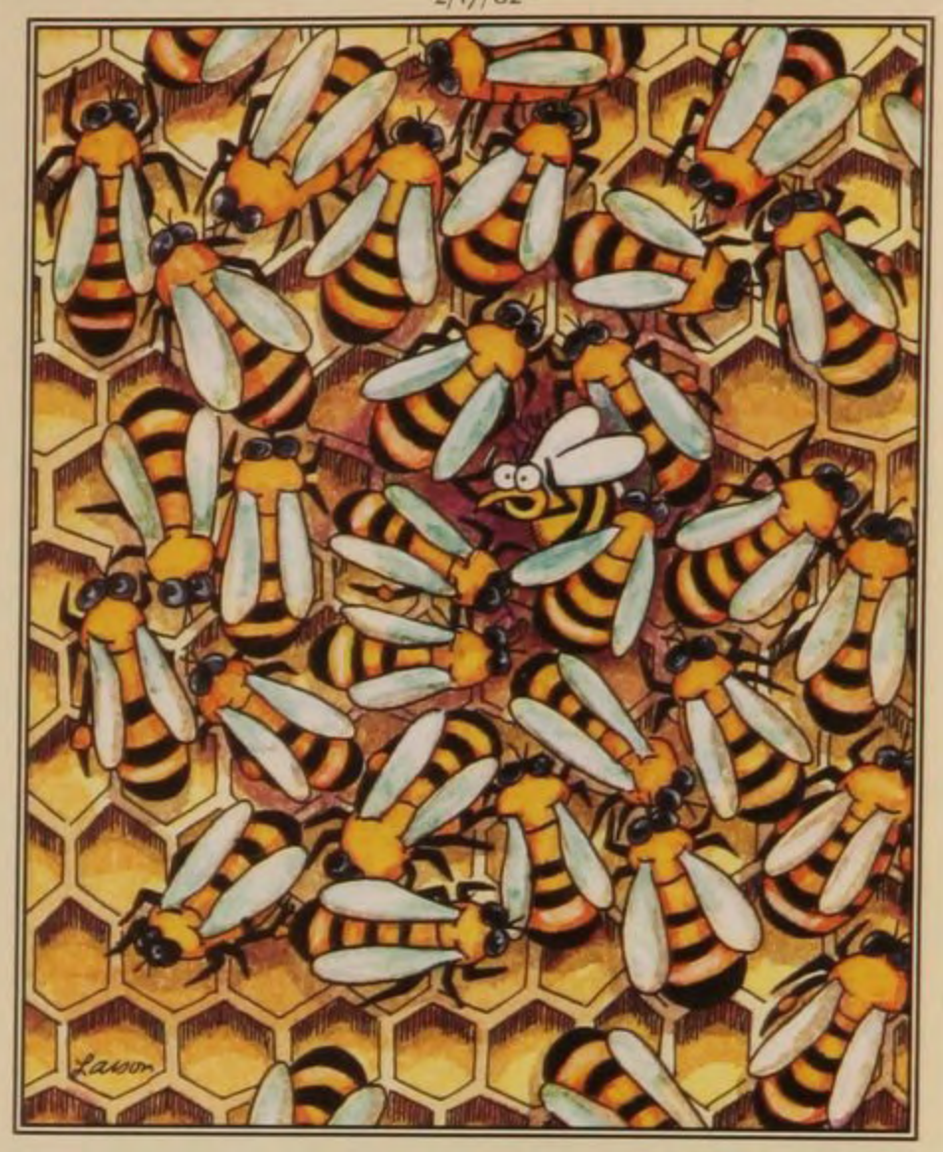
"Look. ... *You* wanna try putting him back together again?"

February 1982

2/15/82

"You idiots! ... We'll never get that thing down the hole!"

2/17/82

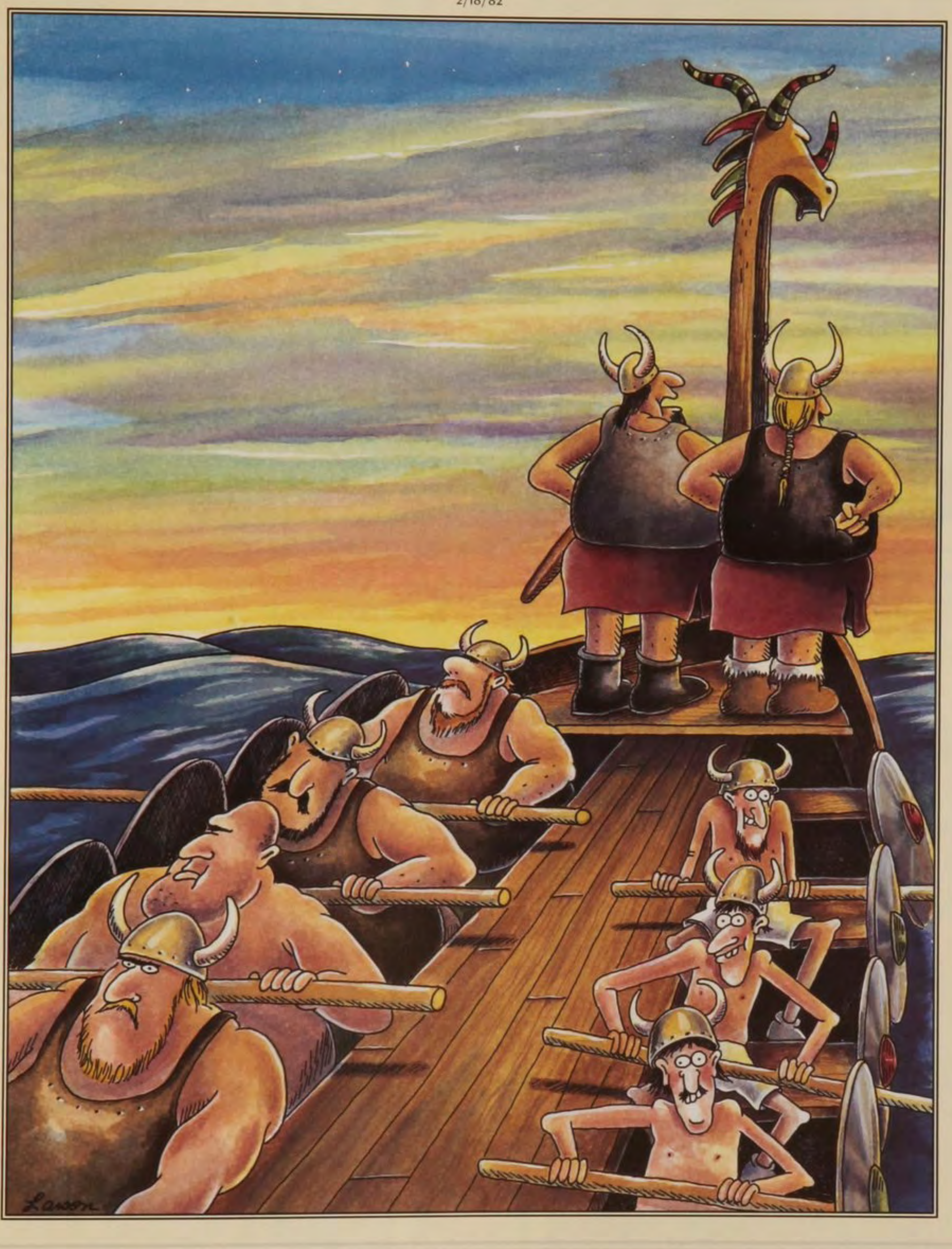


"No more! No more! I can't take it! ... That incessant buzzing sound!"

2/16/82

Great moments in evolution

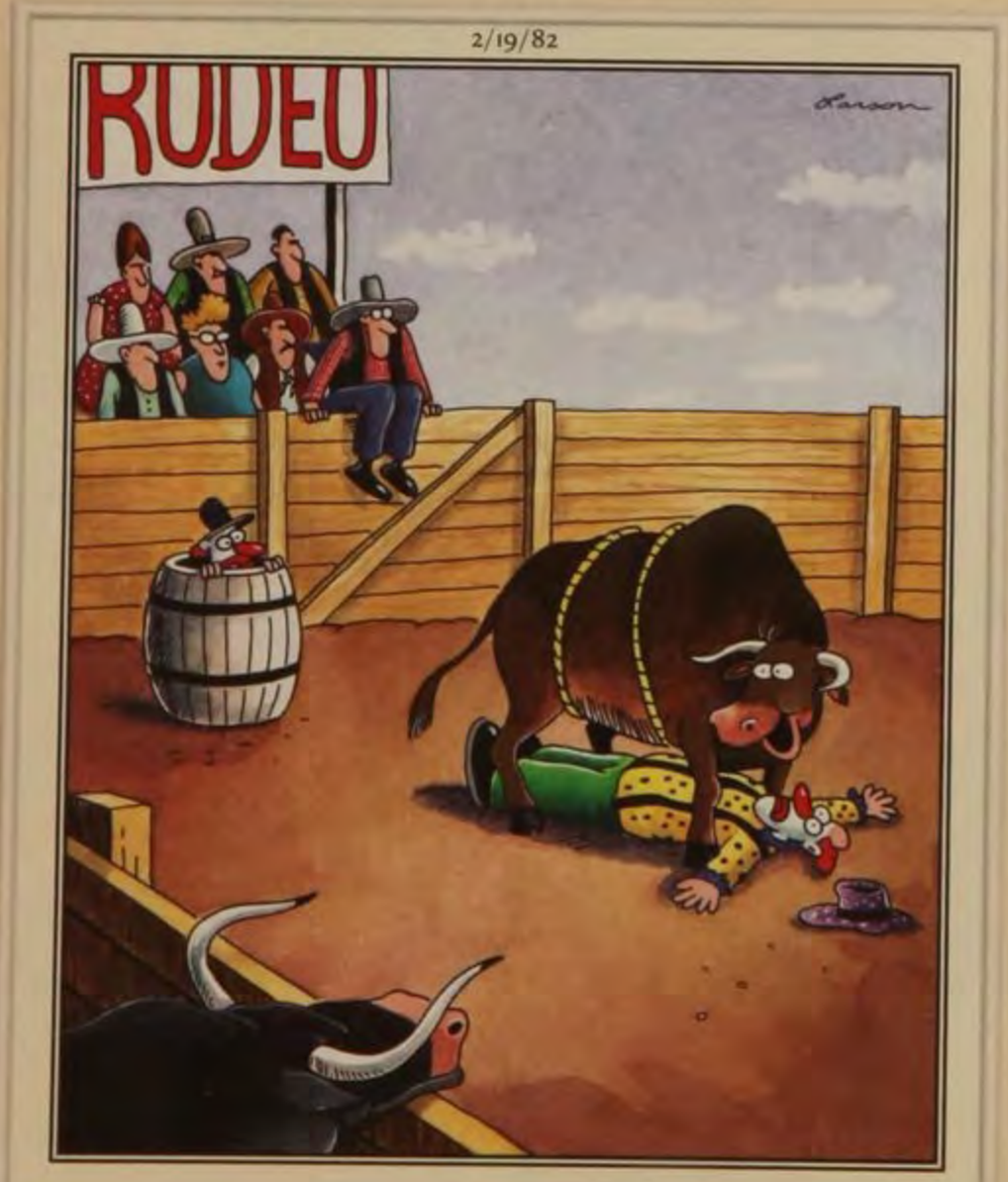
February 1982



"I've got it, too, Omar ... a strange feeling like we've just been going in circles."

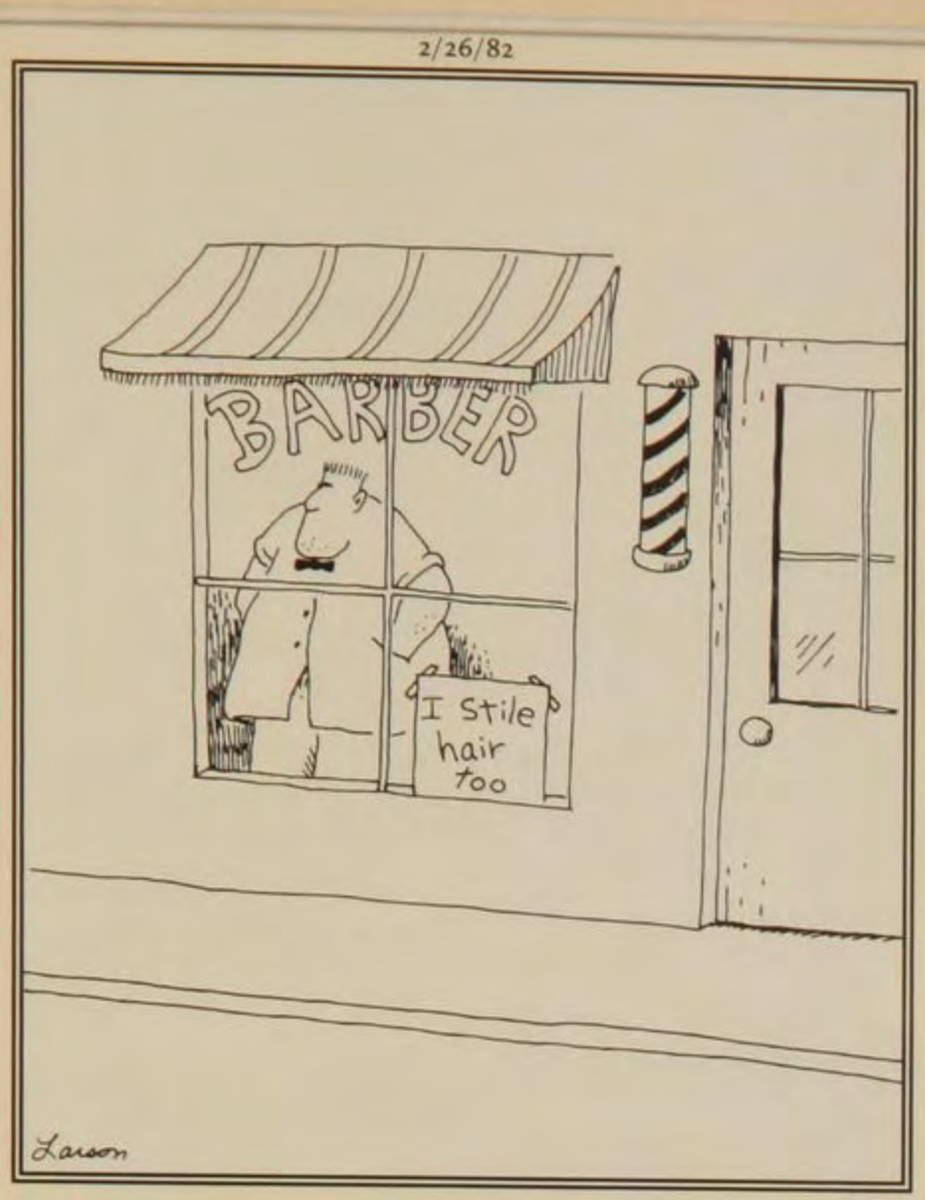
February 1982

Columbus discovers America.



"Hey! I got one! I got one!"

February 1982



"Say ... I could go for something."

"Big Bob says he's getting tired of you saying he doesn't really exist."

March 1982

3/1/82

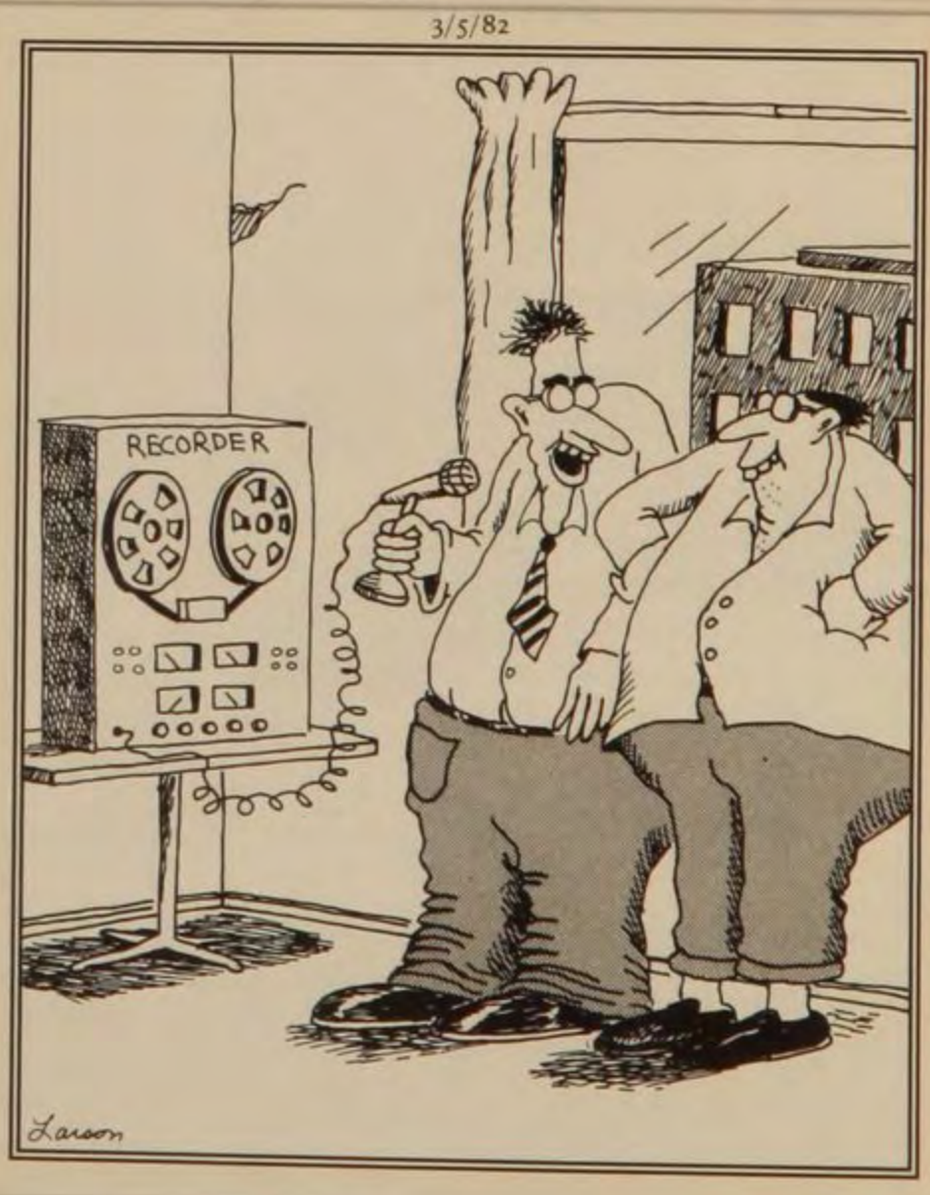
"Me? I *was* charging on the right, when you suddenly went left, so I went left, and then you went right again, you idiot!"

3/2/82

"There! There! See it, Larry? ... It moved a little closer!"

3/4/82

3/5/82



"Oh, wow! I can't believe this thing! ... Does my voice really sound that funny?"

March 1982

"So, Andre! ... The king wants to know how you're coming with *St. George and the Dragon.*"

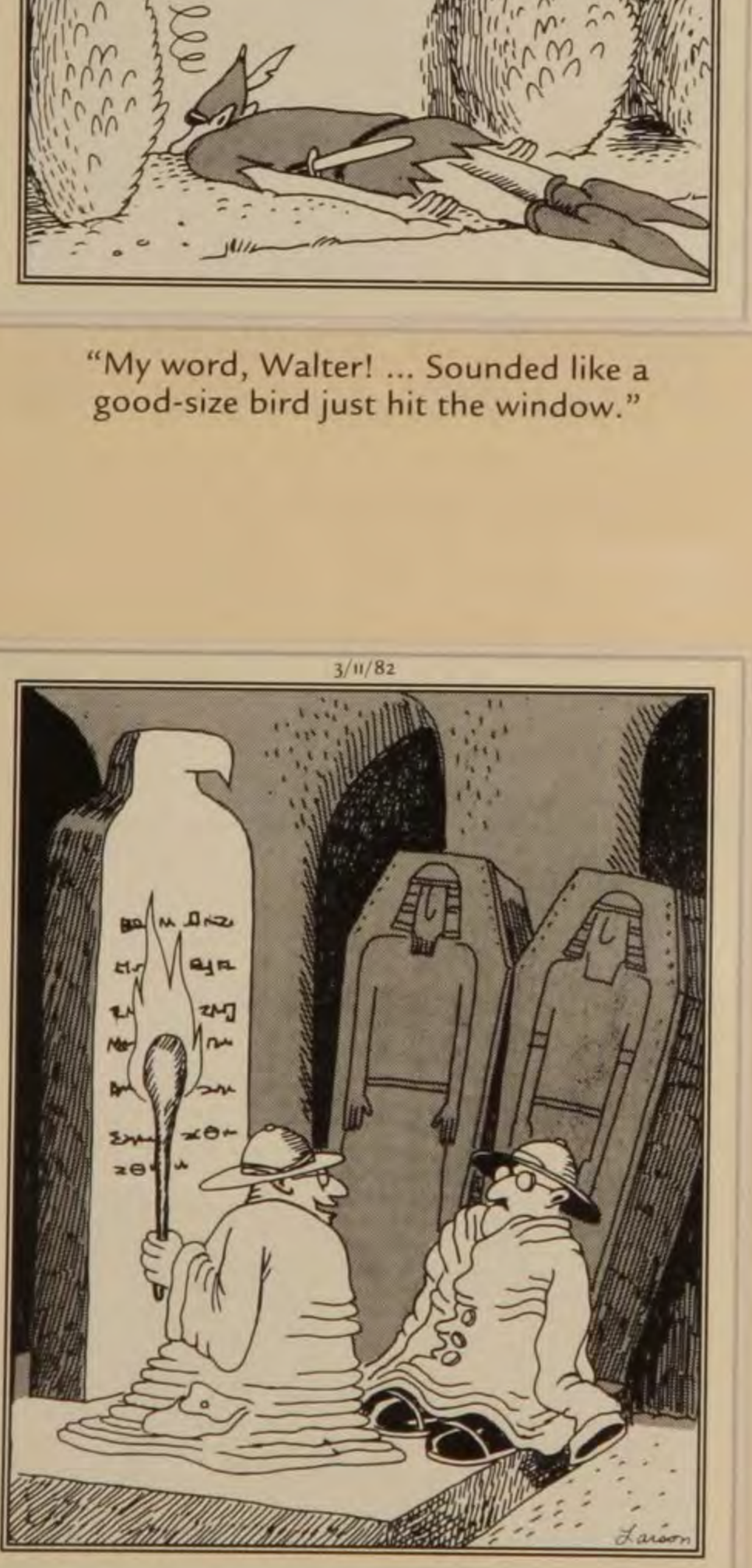
"*Look* at that! ... Give me the good ol' days when a man carried a club, walked semi-erect, and had a brain the size of a walnut."

"FEEDING FRENZY!"

March 1982

"My word, Walter! ... Sounded like a good-size bird just hit the window."

"And this little piggy went weee, weee, weee, weee ... but soon stopped struggling and was eaten."



"Ha! Check this out, Andrews. ... Seems there's some kind of ancient curse on those who defile this crypt."

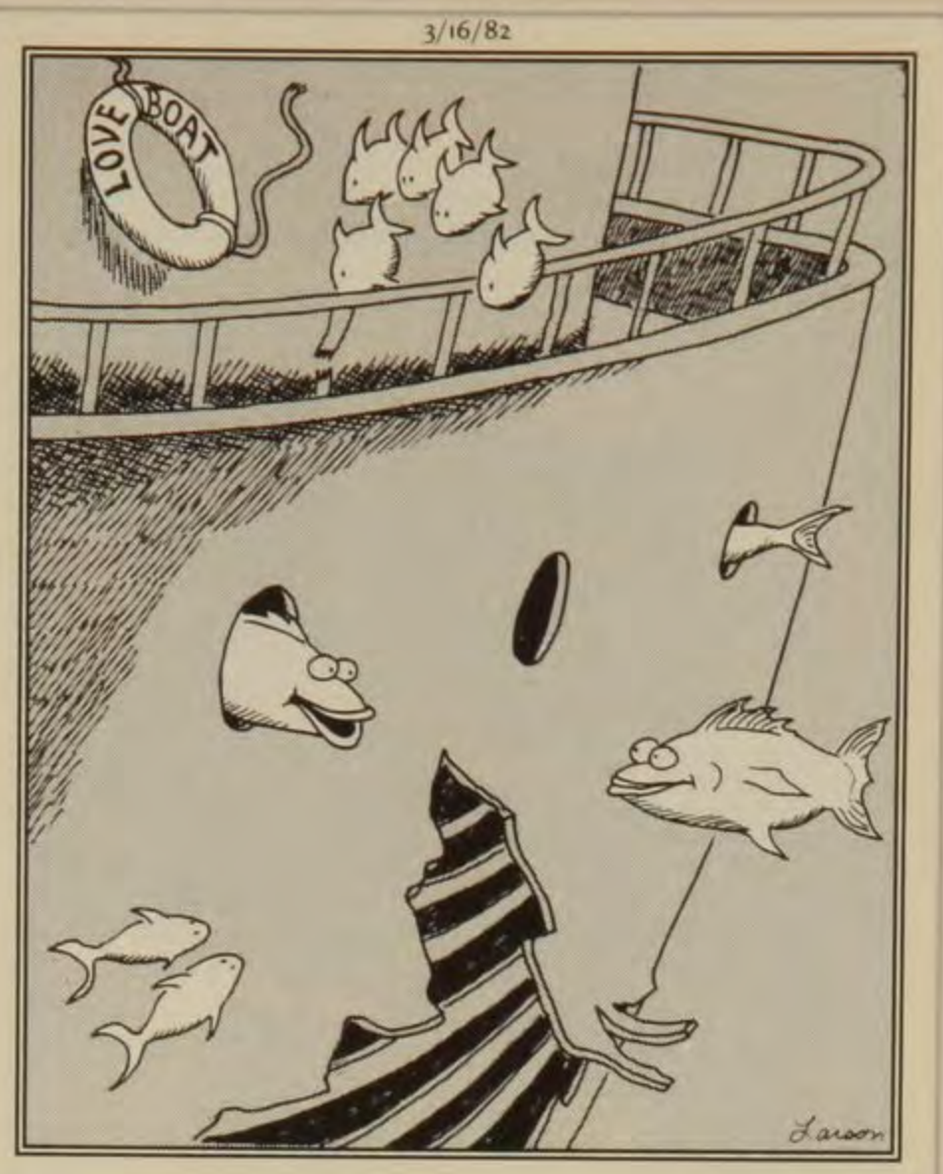
"Dang it! Doris! Hit the light! ... I think there's a mosquito after me!"

March 1982

3/15/82

"Wait! Wait! ... Don't open
that brand of beer!"

3/16/82

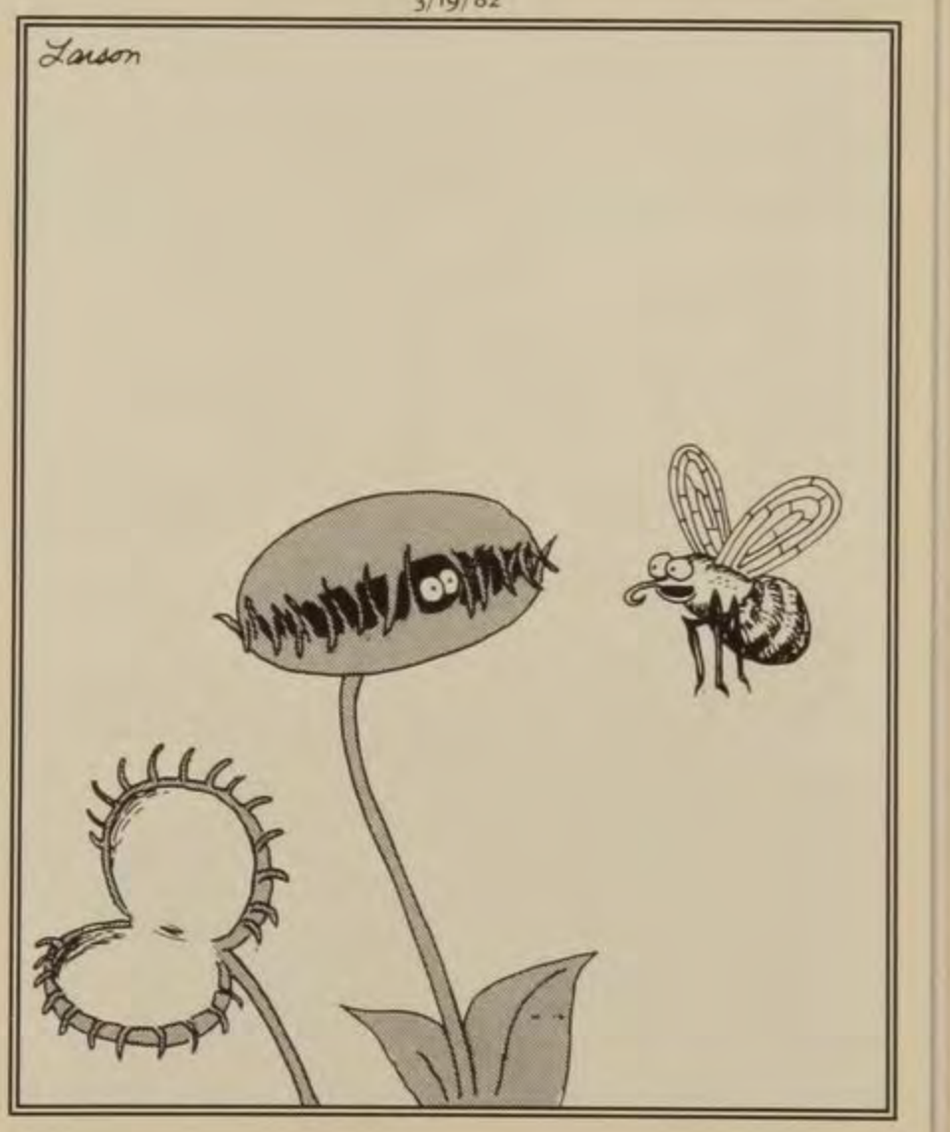


"Hey! Look in here! ... There's all kinds of
cool movie cameras and junk!"

3/17/82

"Aphids! Aphids, Henry! ... Aphids are loose
in the garden!"

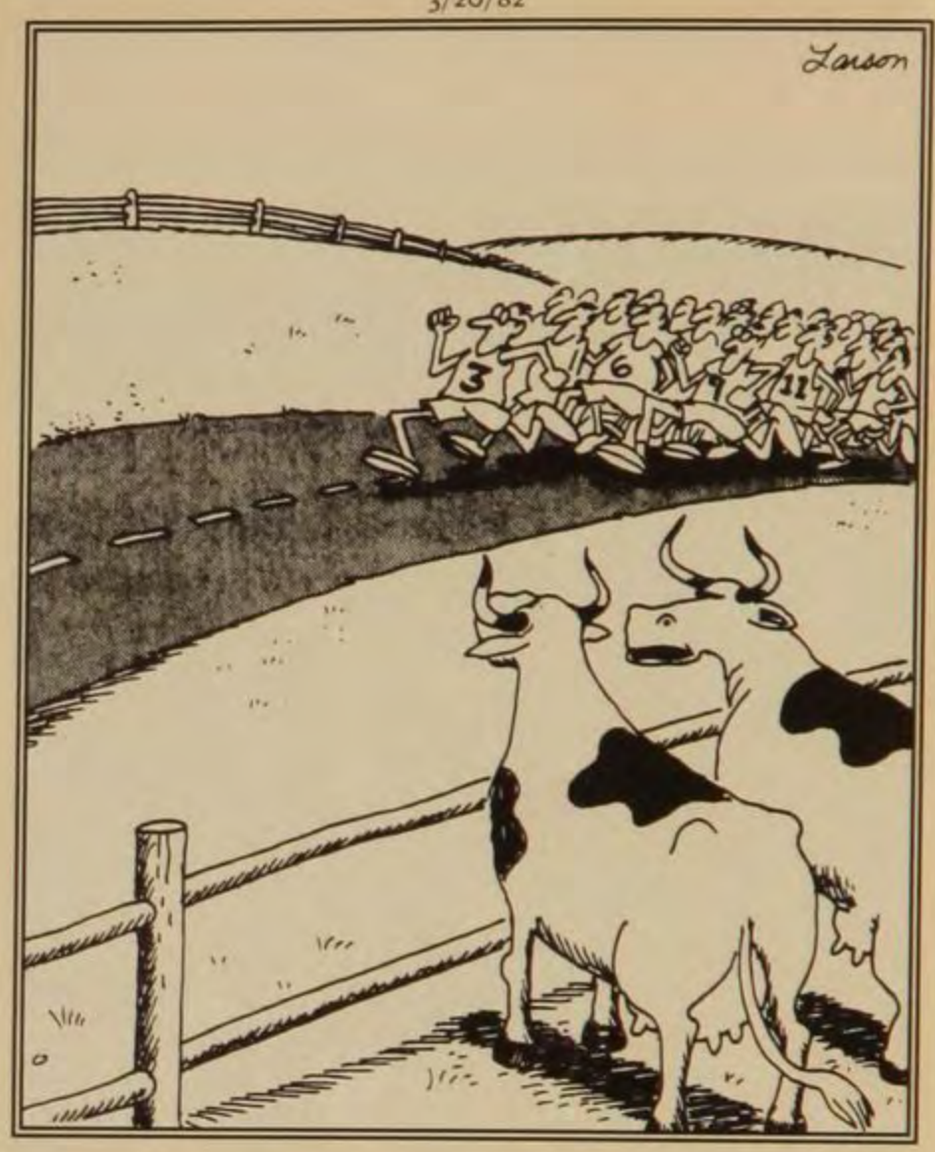
3/19/82



"I don't mean to be callous, Earl, but can
I have your stereo?"

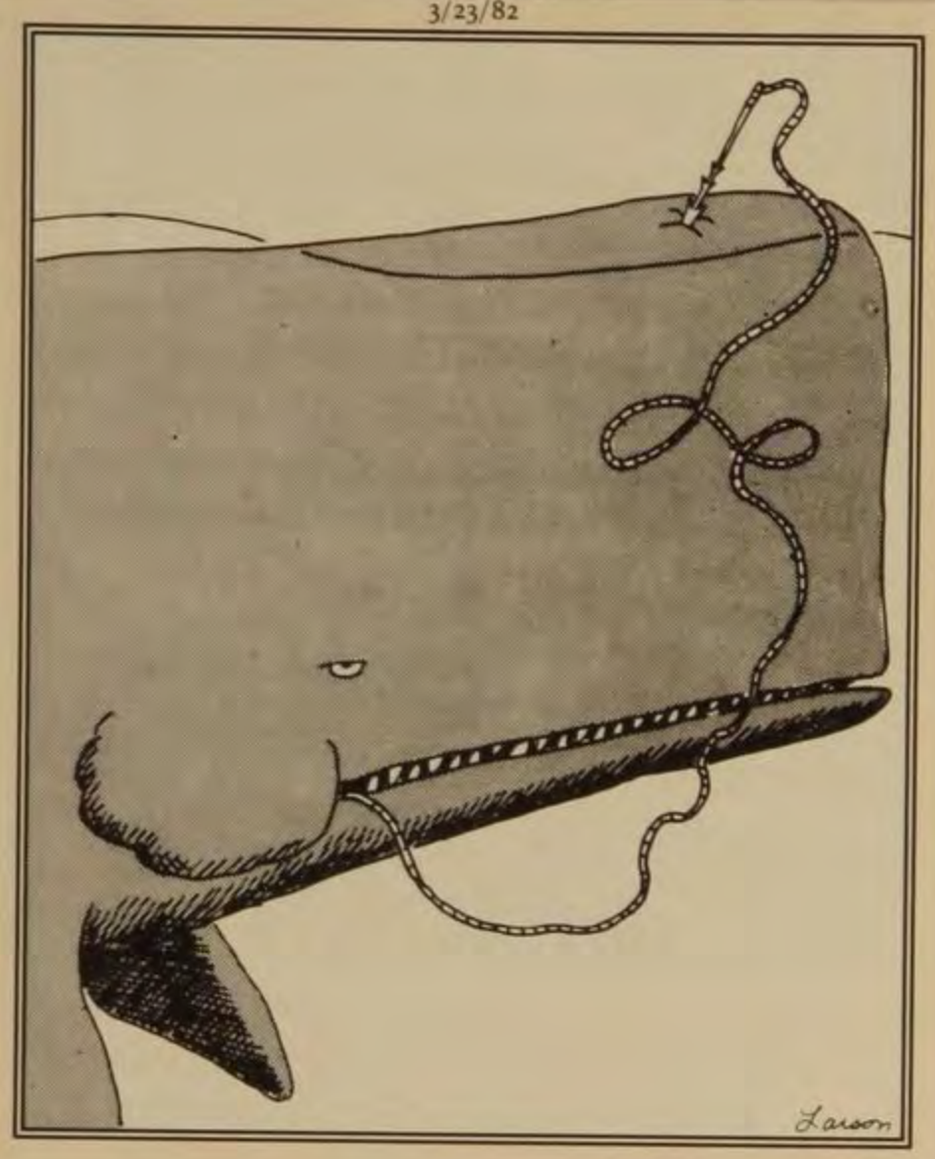
March 1982

3/20/82



"I'd hate to be in a box canyon with those coming at me!"

3/23/82



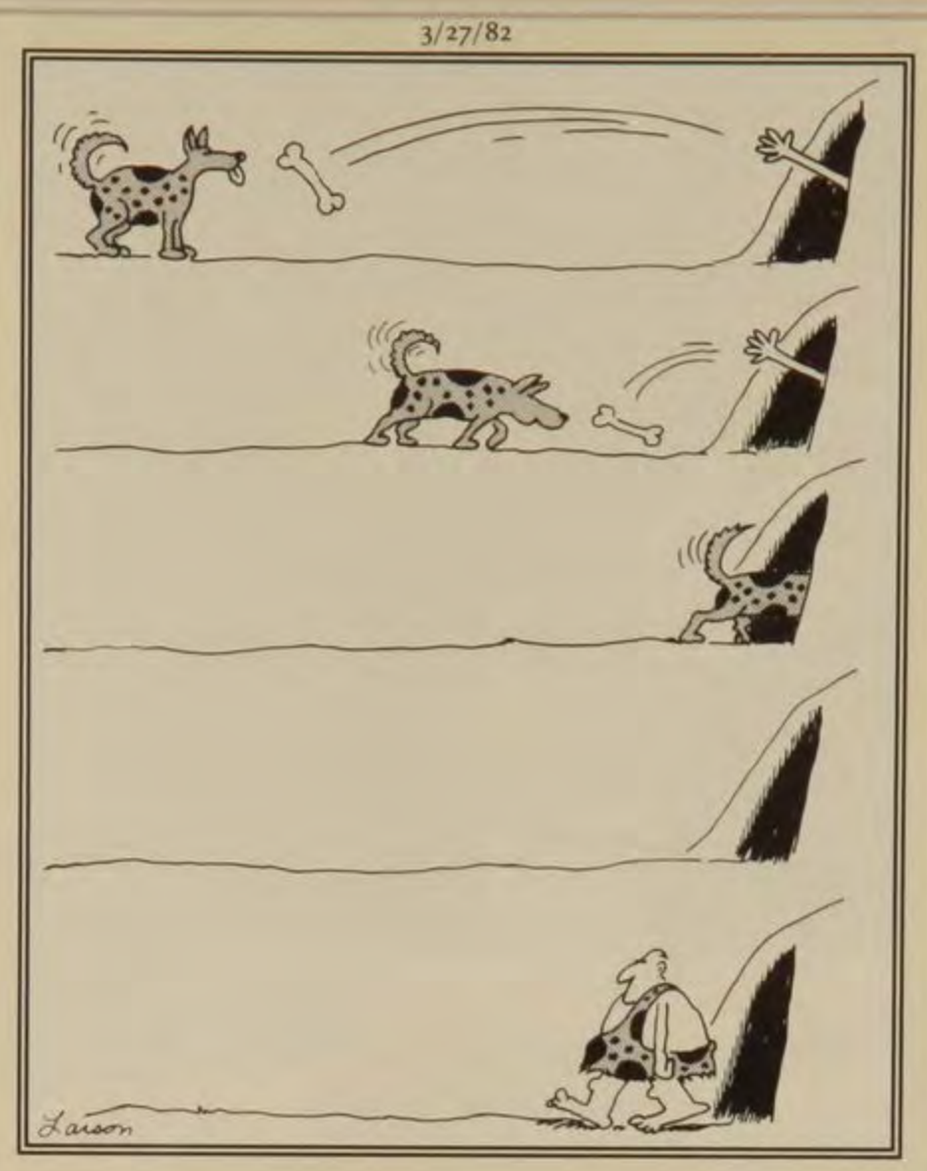
3/24/82

"Now let me get this straight. ... We hired you to babysit the kids, and instead you cooked and ate them *both*?"

3/25/82

March 1982

"Be firm, Arnold. ... Let them in once and they'll expect it every time."



First encounters

"That's right, Jimmy. ... One day your mother and I found you underneath a cabbage leaf."

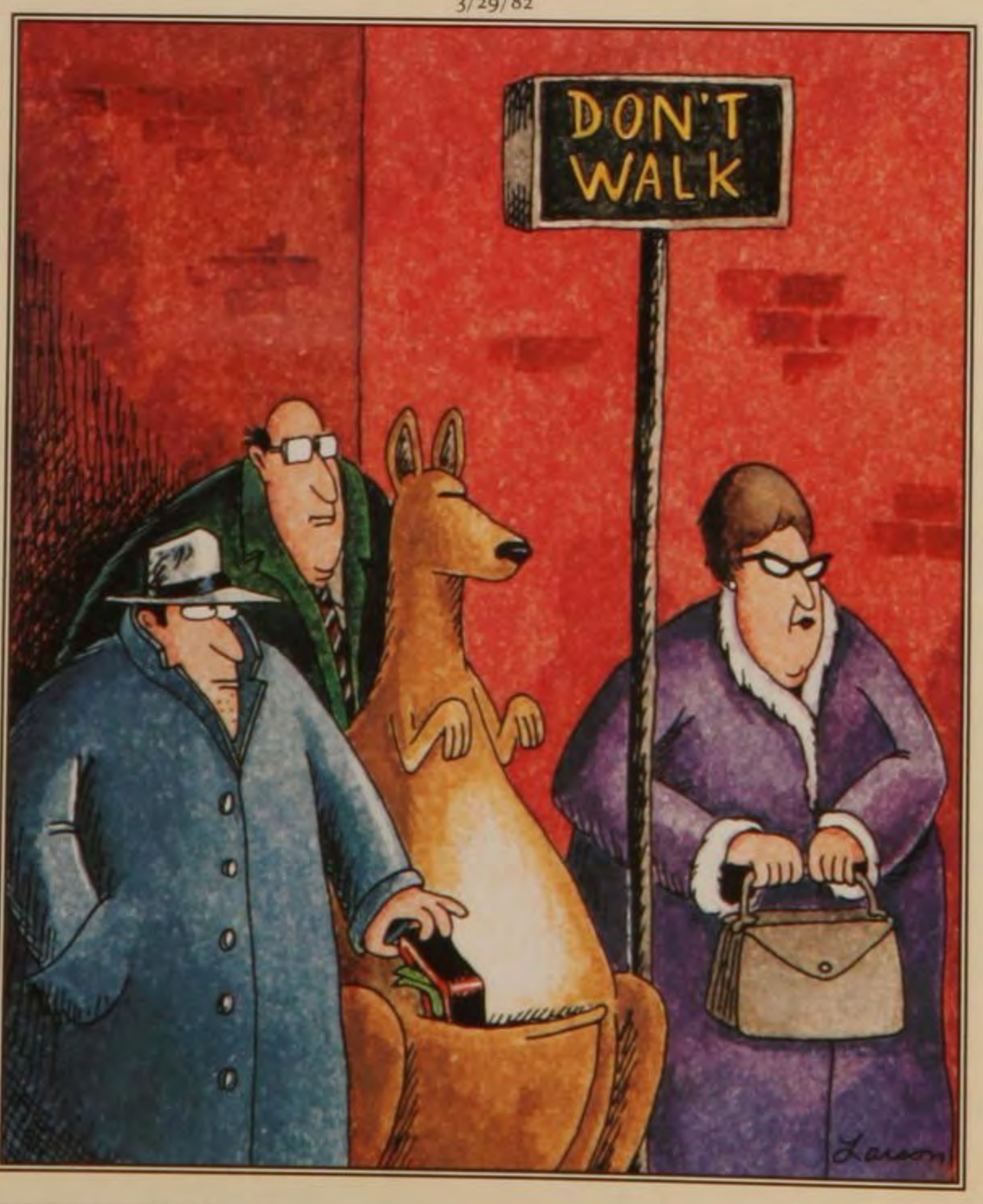
March 1982

3/18/82

"Now that constellation, Jimmy, is simply called 'The Big Dip.'"

3/22/82

3/29/82



April 1982

4/2/82

4/5/82

Los Angeles Times
Comics

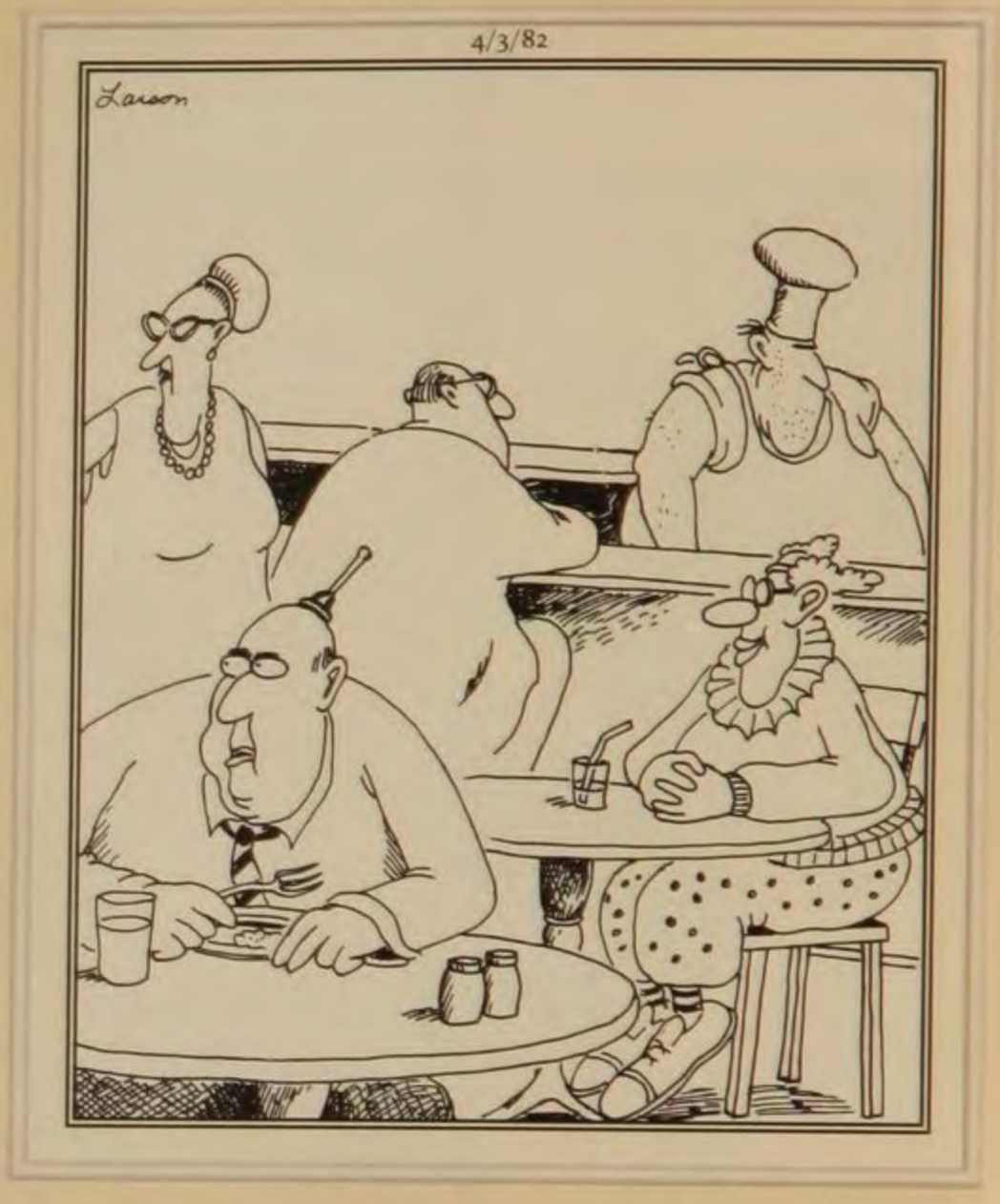
I cannot understand the cleverness of this Gary Larson. Do these come from the inmates of prisons & are sold to him which he in turn sells (them) to you?

What lies behind these warped cartoons? I wish some one would clear their meaning (of them) to me.

To me they are a waste of space and are an insult to a L.A. Times reader who can find no reason for them in your newspaper.

R. E. Lewis

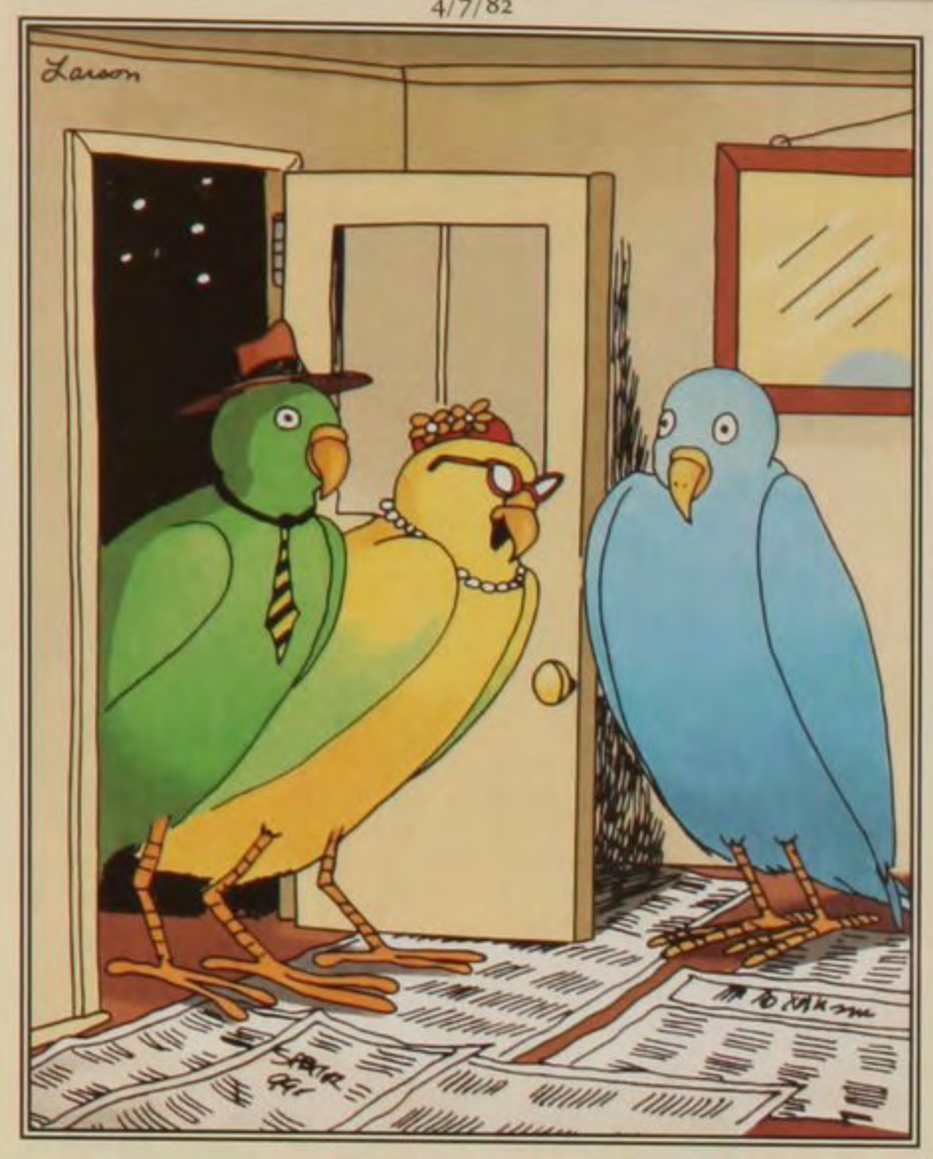
April 1982



"So, Billy! Seems your father and I can never leave without you getting yourself into some kind of trouble!"

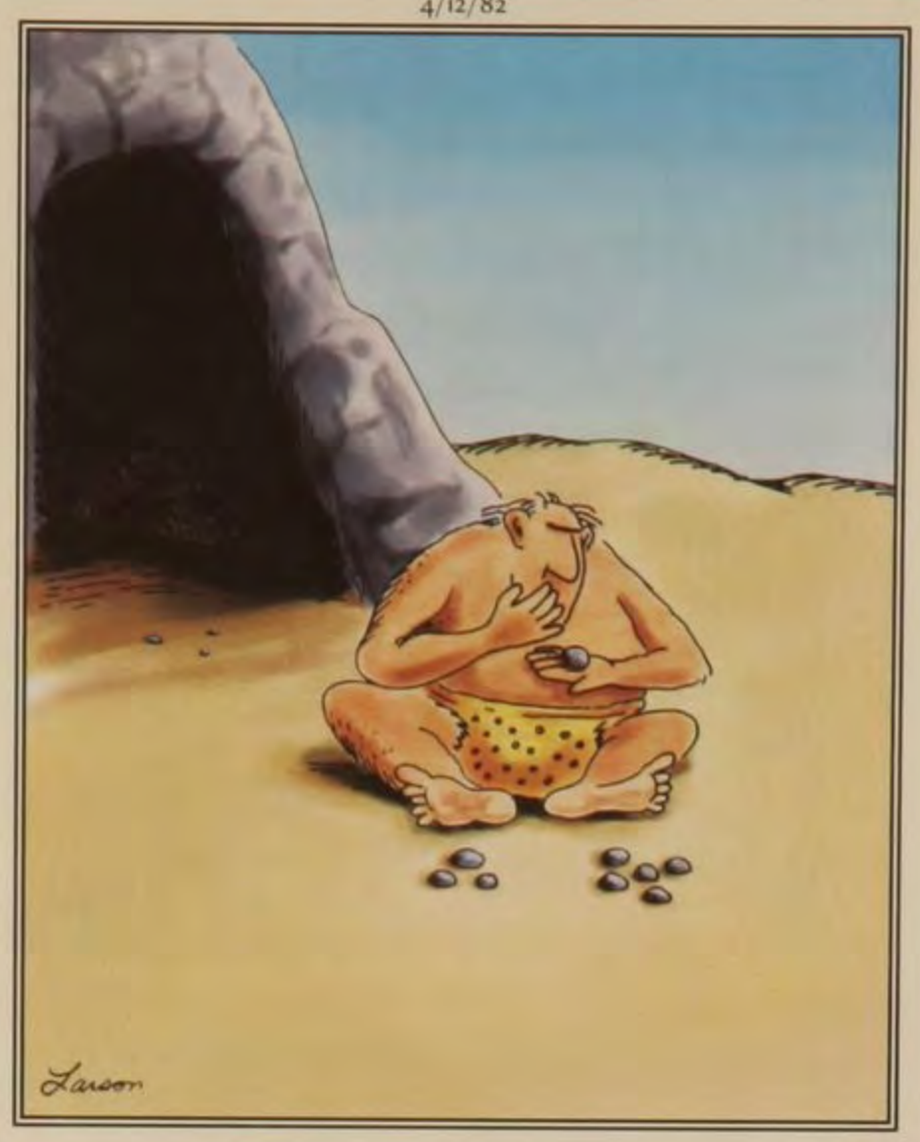
April 1982

4/7/82



"What a lovely home, Edna! ... And look at the fresh newspaper, Stanley!"

4/12/82



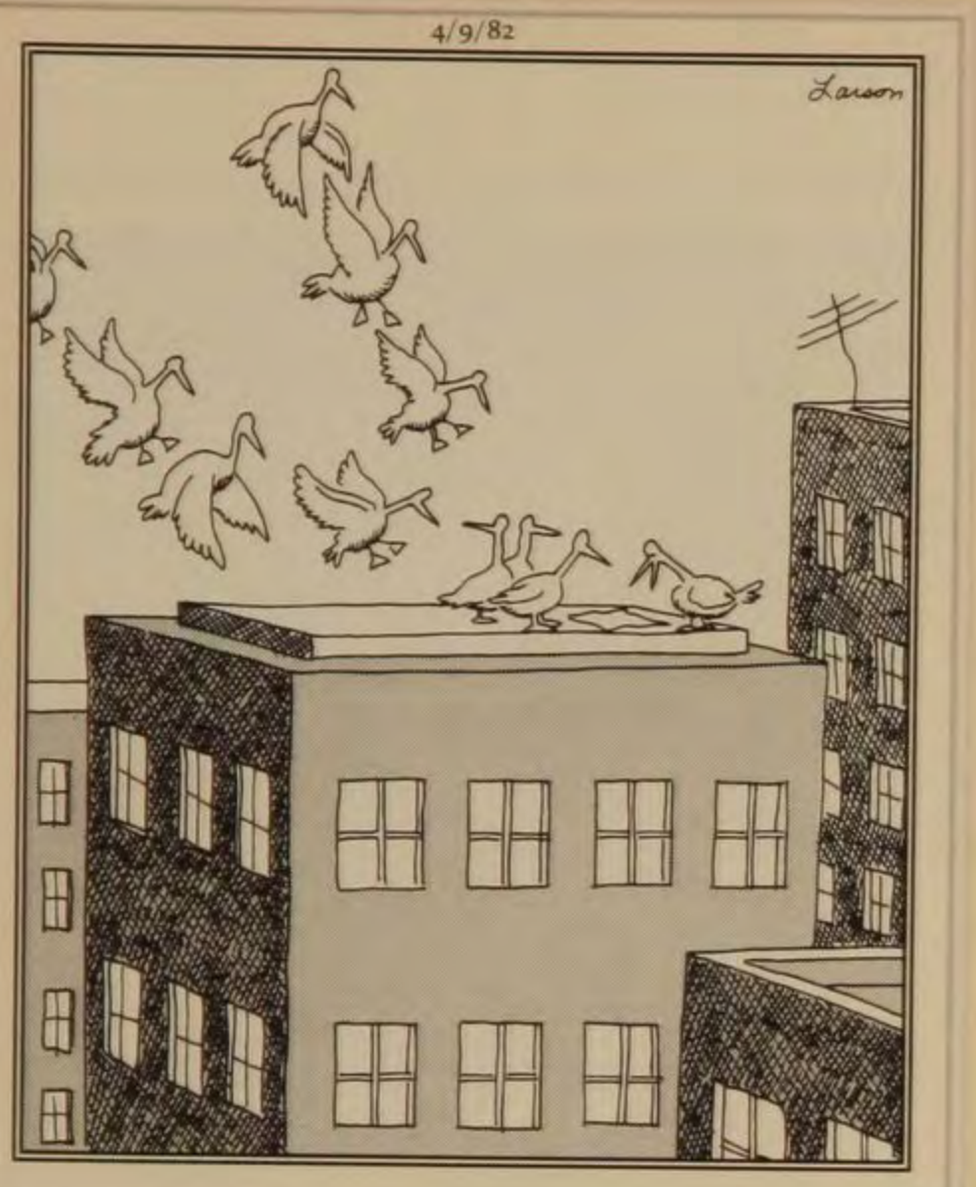
Early stages of math anxiety

4/13/82

"Wait! Wait! Cancel that. ... I guess it says 'helf.'"

4/17/82

April 1982



"For crying out loud! ... We were supposed to turn south after that last mountain range!"

"I found him in the park. ... I pulled a thorn from his foot and he just sort of followed me home."

April 1982

4/16/82

"Sho I shez to her, 'Hey, look! I'm tired of livin' in this hole, diggin' dirt, and eatin' worms!'"

4/19/82

"I'm not telling you kids again! ... Stand on one leg, turn your head straight back, and go to sleep!"

4/20/82

"Wouldn't you know it! ... A quiet day at the beach, and a real person shows up!"

4/23/82

"Quick! ... Run up and tell Him we found them!"

April 1982

4/22/82

"Gee, whiz ... you mean I get a *third* wish, too?"

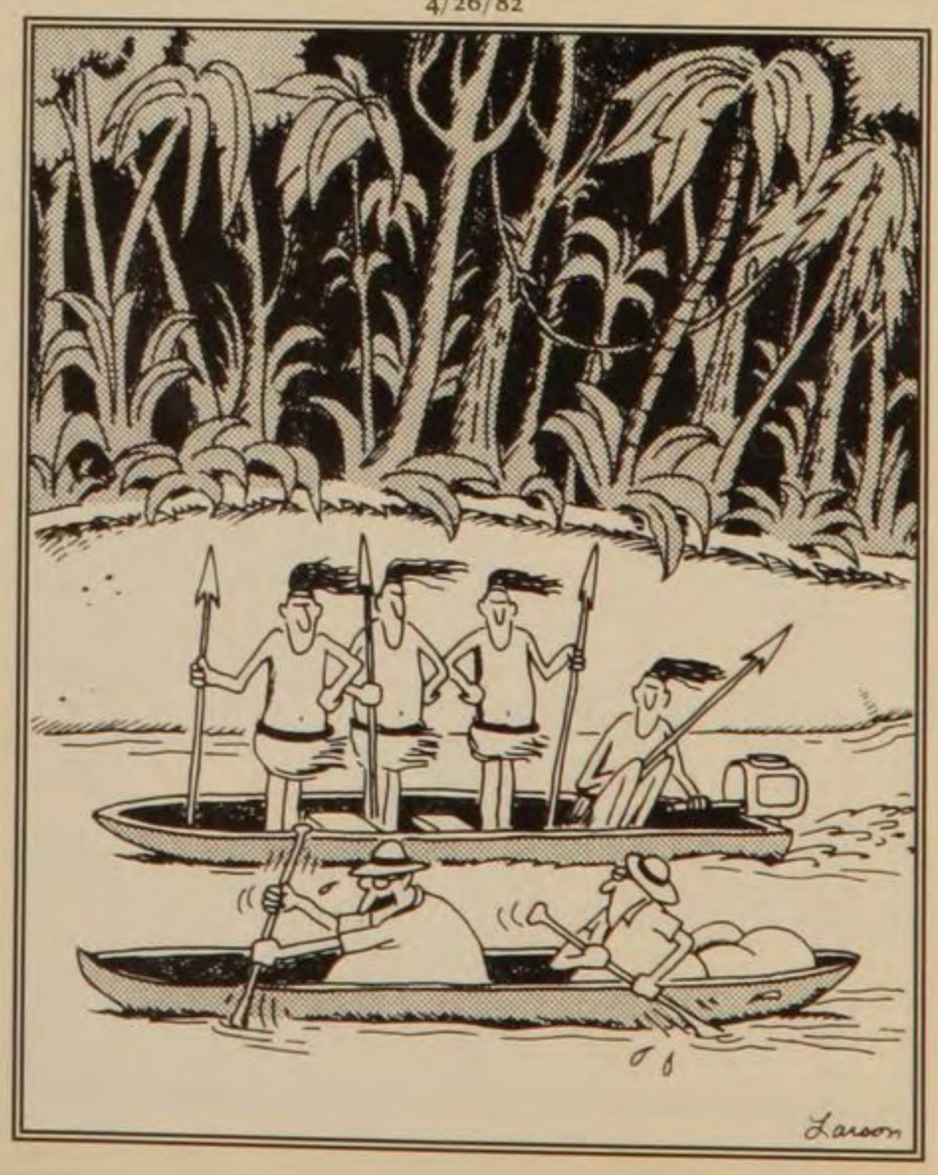
4/21/82

"So! You admit that this is, indeed, your banjo the police found at the scene, but you expect this jury to believe you were never in the kitchen with Dinah?"

4/24/82

"Oh, c'mon now. ... *I* know! Why don't you two go downstairs today and build a monster?"

4/26/82



"Are they gaining, Huxley?"

April 1982

4/27/82

"Well, when it's my turn, I just hope I go quietly. ... You know—without a lot of running around."

4/30/82

4/28/82

4/29/82

May 1982

"Excuse our excitement, Mr. Farnsworth, but your cries for help have afforded science a rare opportunity."

The volcano god of the Nerdesians

"What? ... You mean *no one* brought the buns?"

May 1982

5/6/82

"ARMY ANTS!"

5/7/82

"See, Agnes? ... It's just Kevin."

5/5/82

"Sorry to bother you, Sylvia, but your Henry's over here and he's got my cat treed again."

May 1982

"Say ... would you like to contribute to an endangered species?"

"No, he's not busy. ... In fact, that whole thing is just a myth."

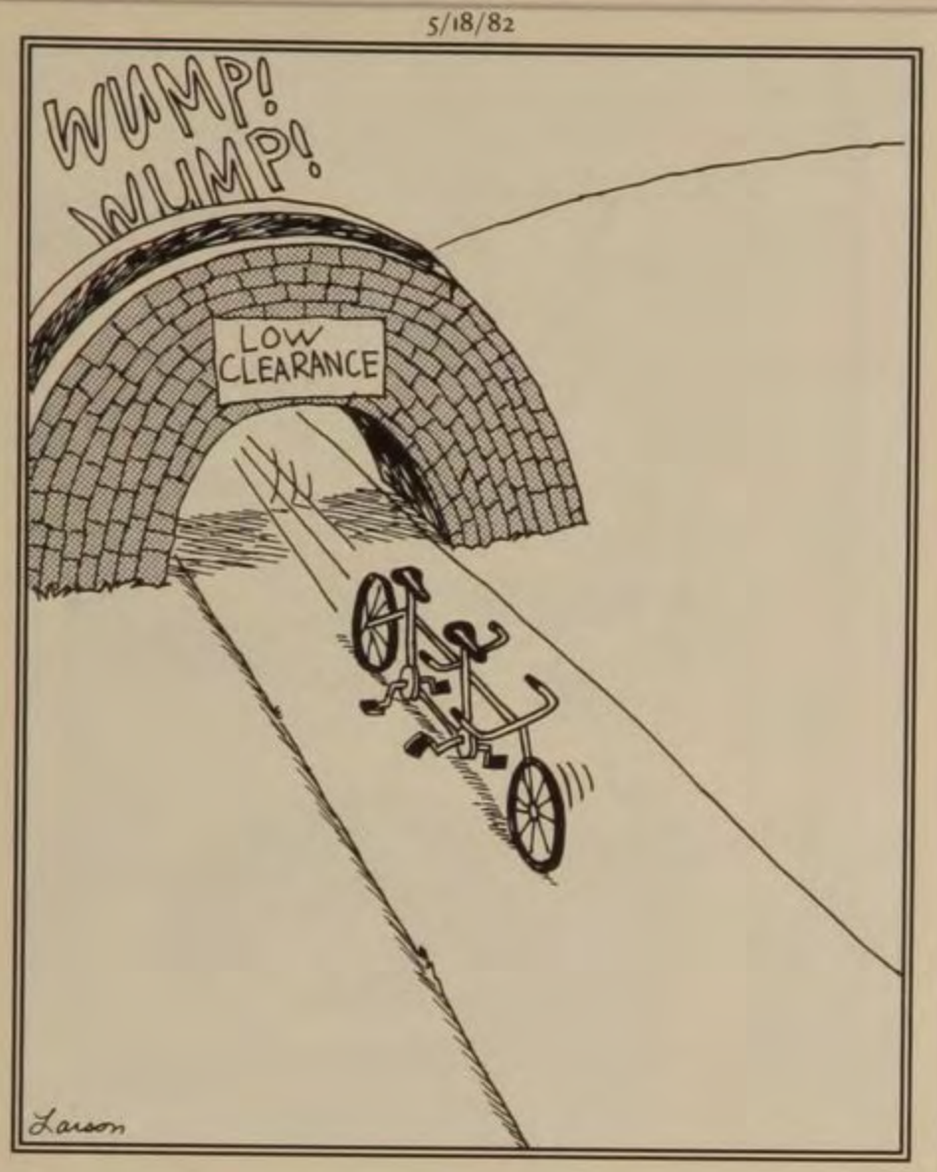
May 1982

"Uh-oh ... I think Bobby Joe went foraging in that direction."

"By Jove! We've found it, Simmons! ... The Secret Elephant Playground!"

May 1982

5/18/82



5/20/82

5/22/82

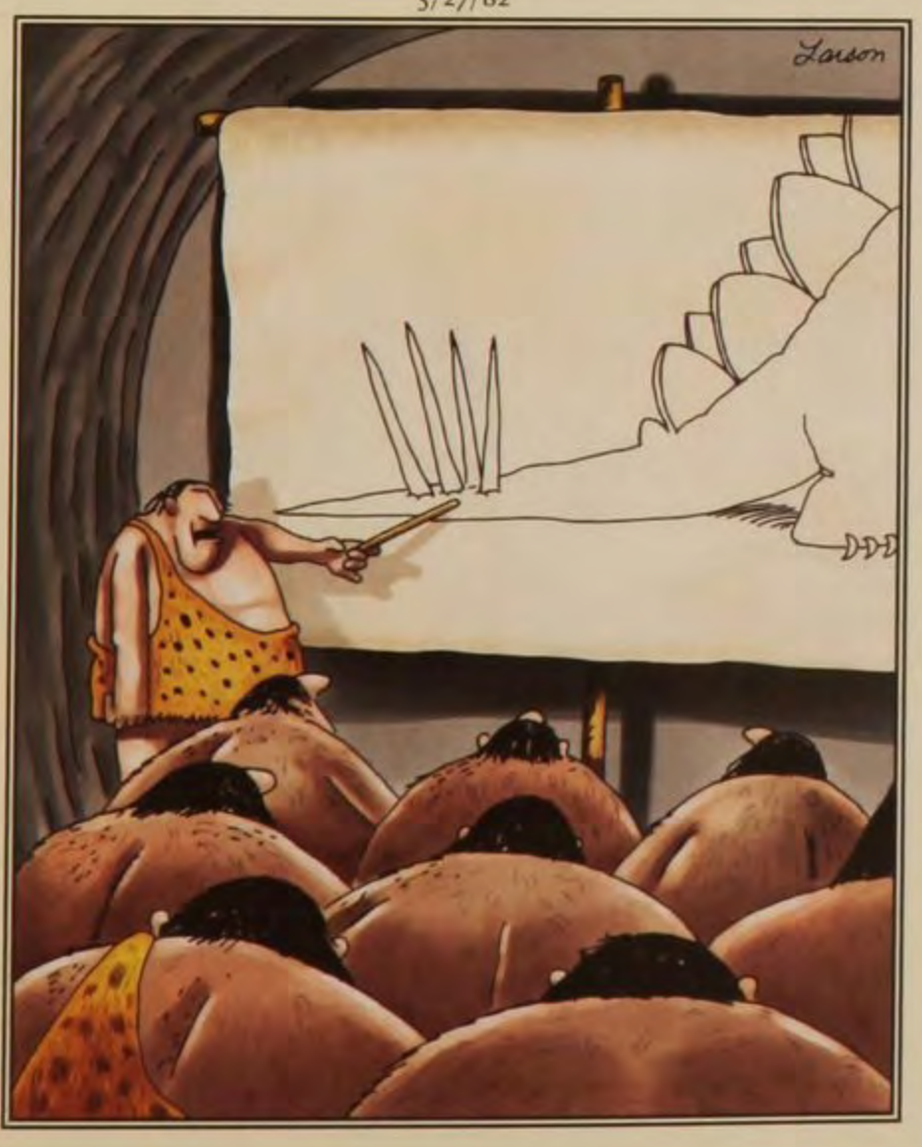
Never, never do this.

5/19/82

"Well, no wonder! ... This ain't the place."

May 1982

Early Man

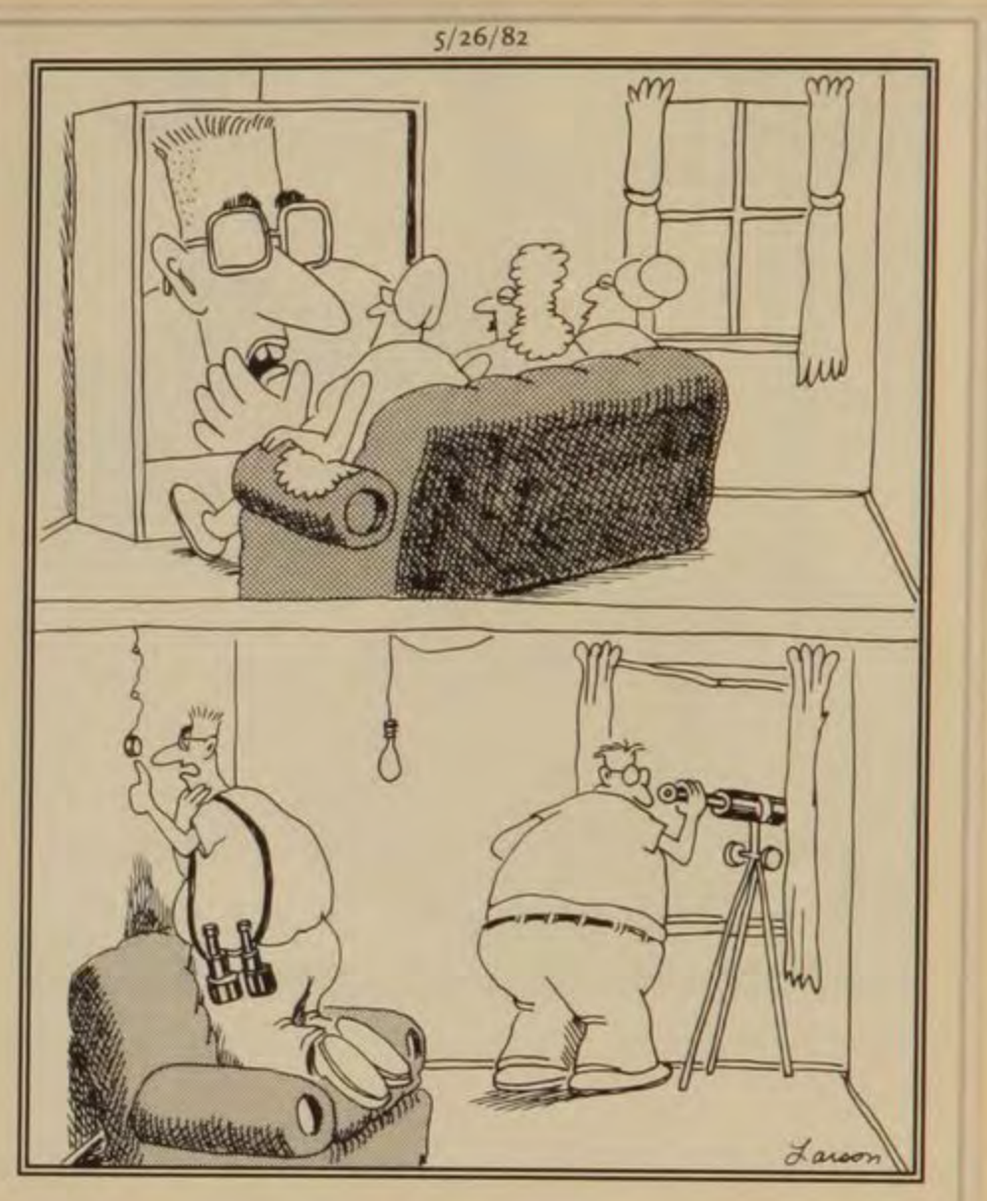


"Now, this end is called the thagomizer ...
after the late Thag Simmons."

"On the other hand, gentlemen, what if we
gave a war and *everybody* came?"

May 1982

"Dirty, low-down skunk! ... I saw him slip that last card from his sleeve just before he yelled 'Fish!'"



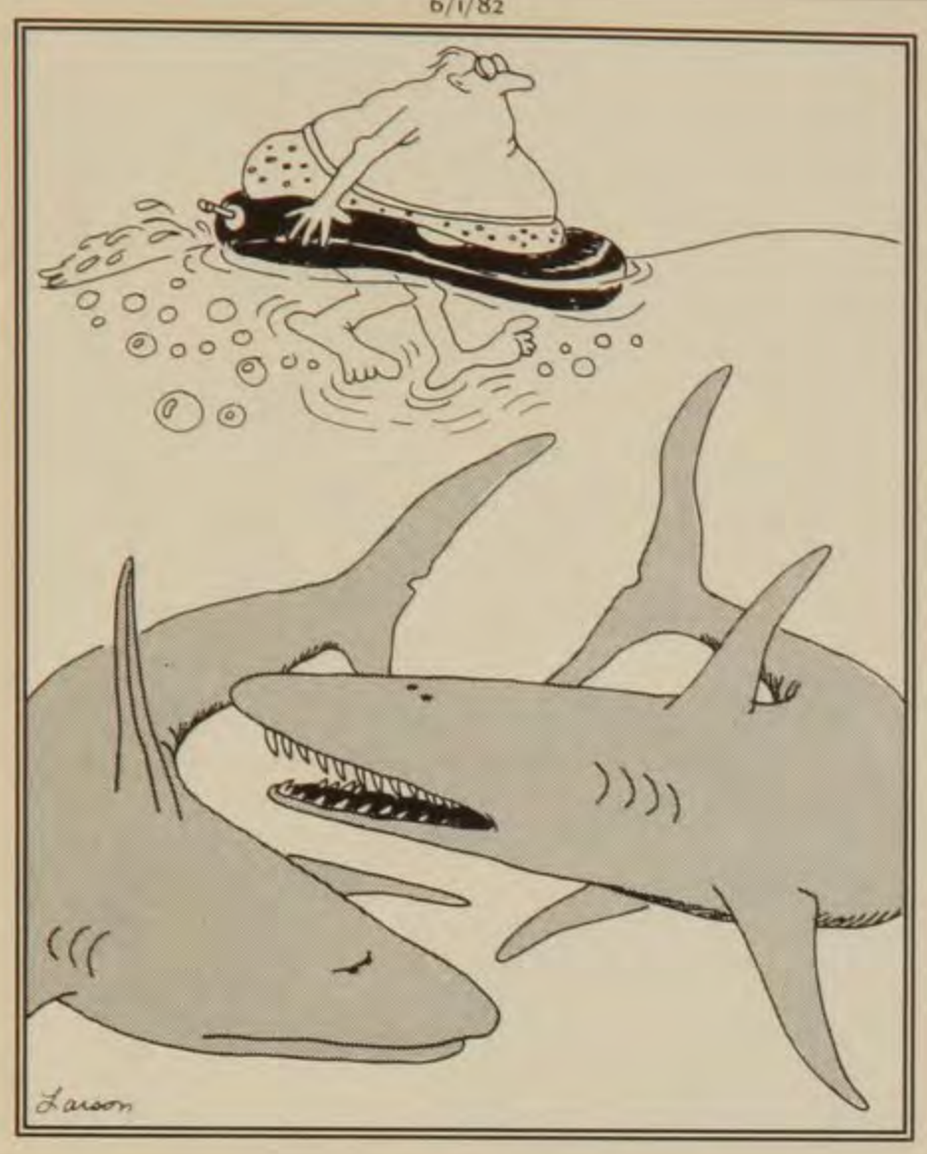
"Say, Carl ... forget the Hendersons for a second and come look at this thing."

After 23 uneventful years at the zoo's snakehouse, curator Ernie Schwartz has a cumulative attack of the willies.

"Well, well ... seems we've found what's been causing that ringing sensation in your ear, Mr. Foley."

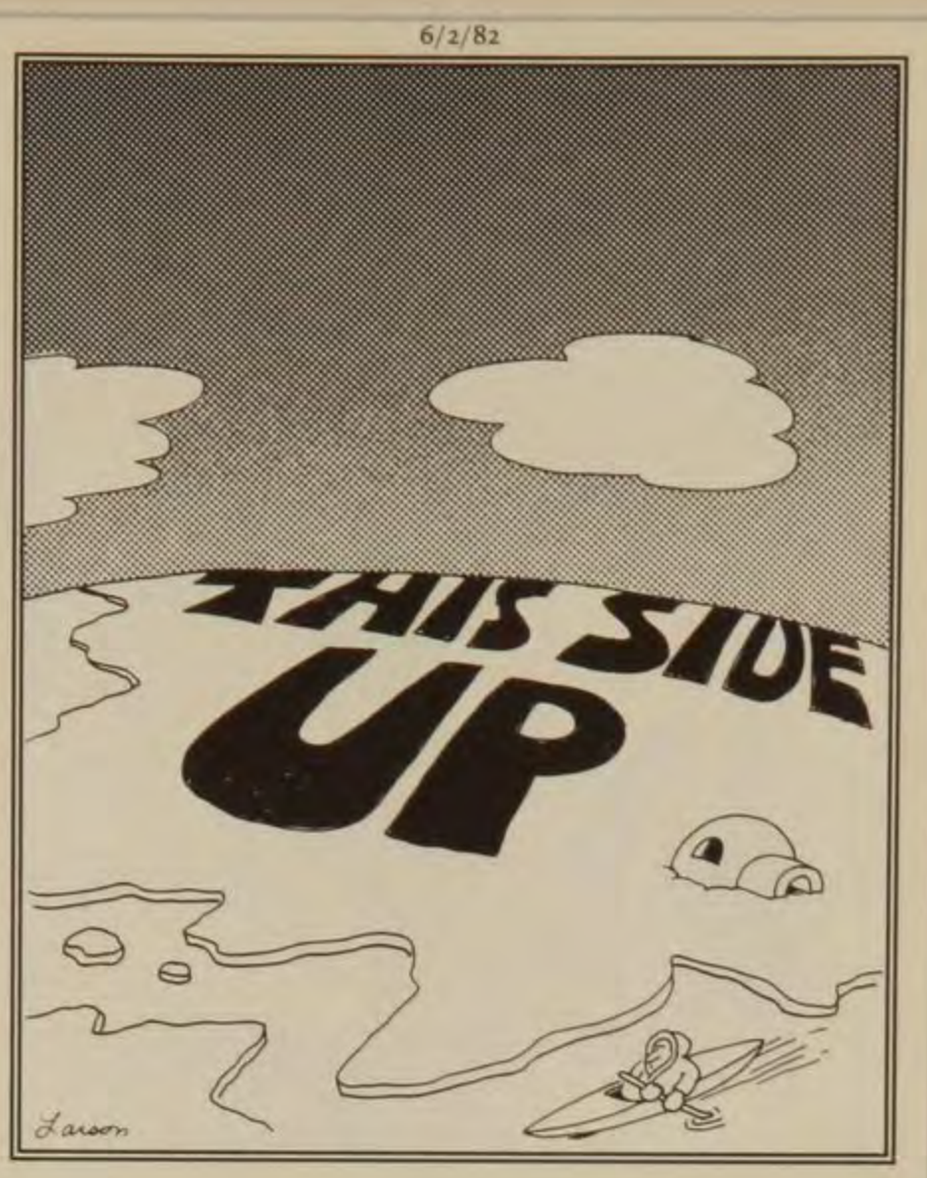
June 1982

6/1/82



"I'm tempted, but it looks really high in cholesterol."

6/2/82



6/3/82

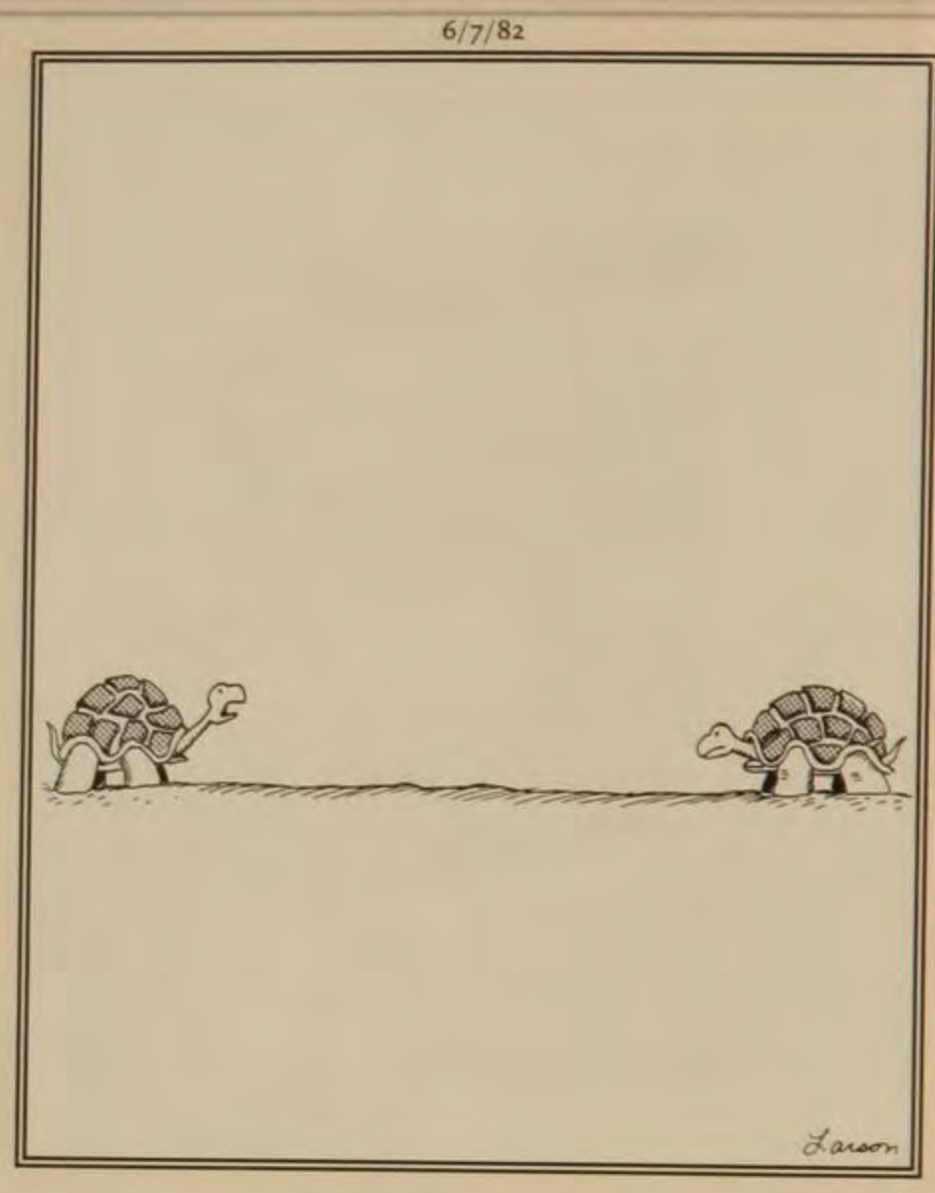
"Larry? Betty? ... Stand up, will ya? ... These are some friends of mine, folks, who flew all the way in from the dump."

6/4/82

Dinnertime for the young Wright brothers

June 1982

"Well, that should do it. ... When Mr. Warner comes around, make sure he gets all the ice cream he wants."

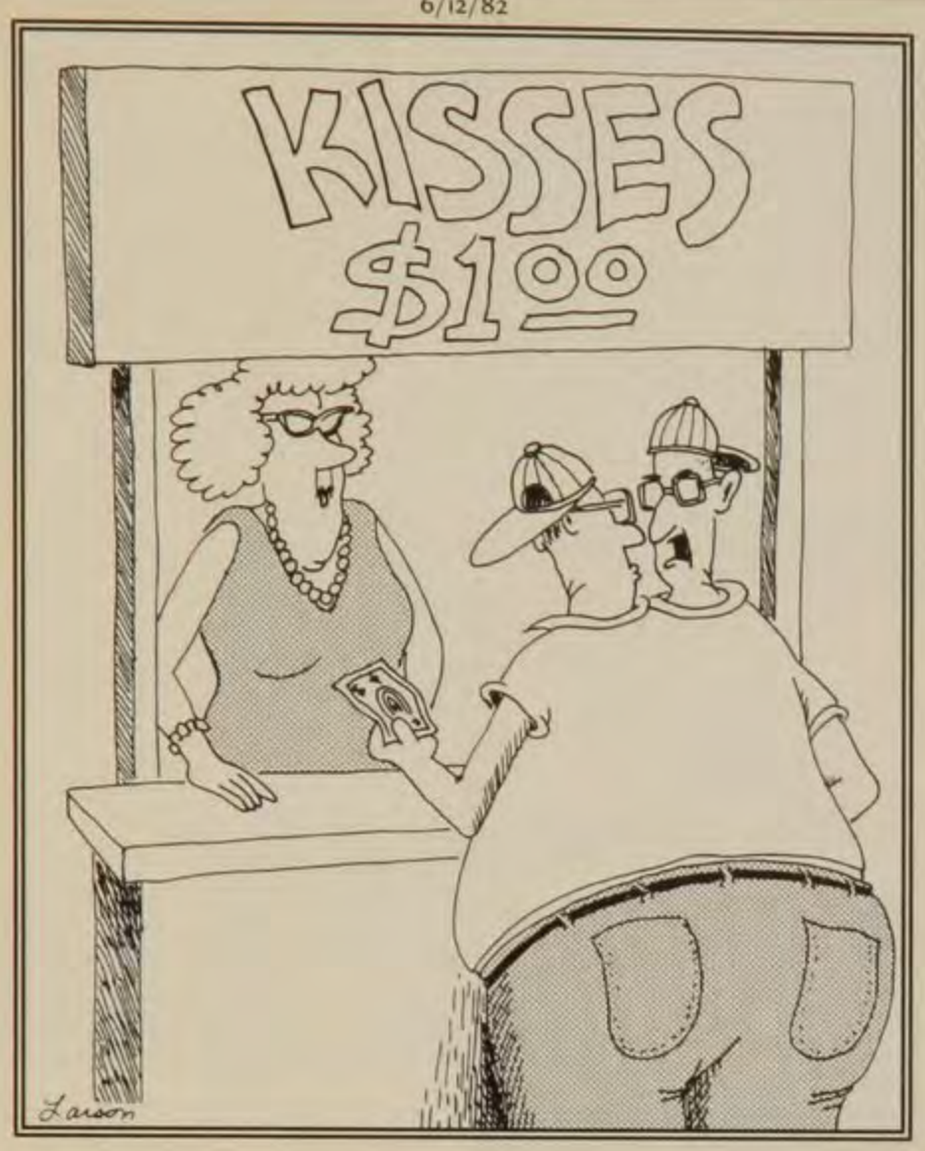


"This is it, Carl! ... We head straight at each other and the first one to veer off is 'chicken.'"

"I say it every time, 'Watch your head, Frank! Watch your head!'... But do you listen?"

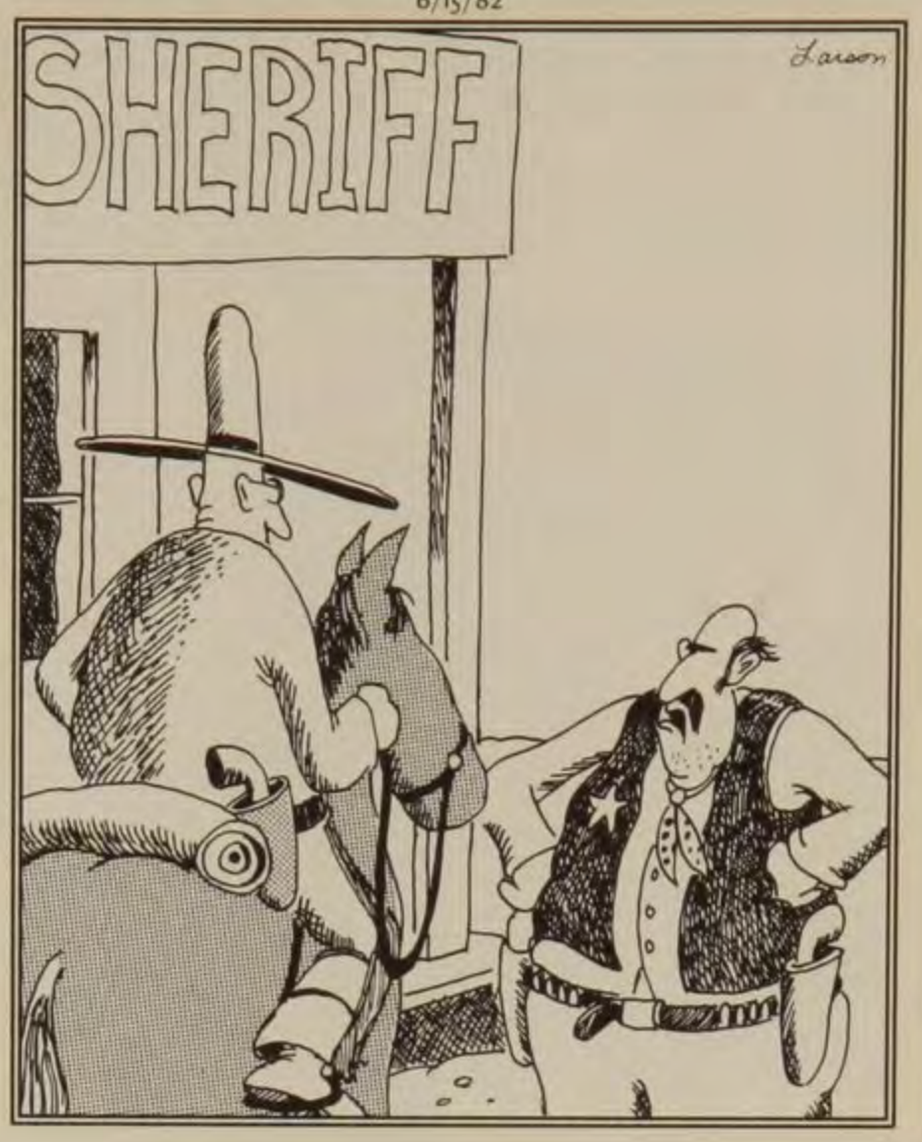
June 1982

6/12/82



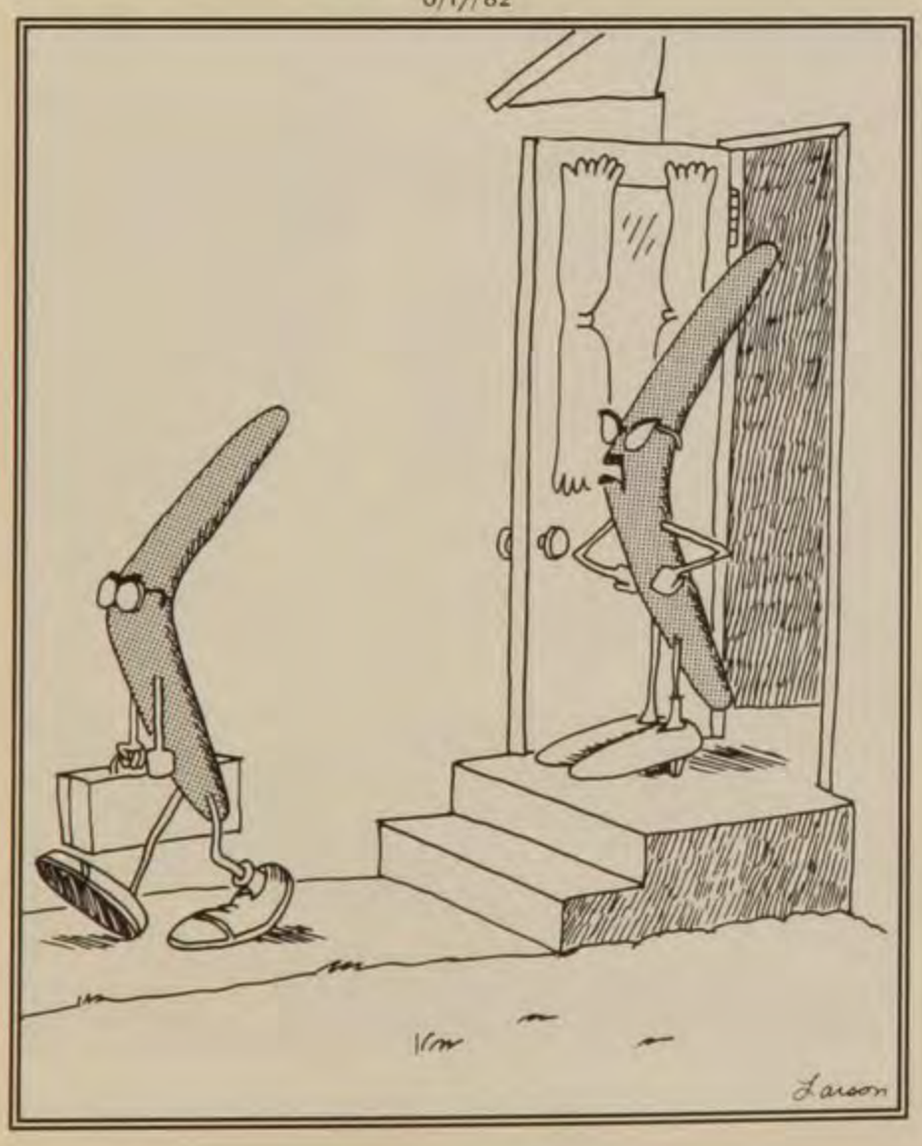
"It's *my* turn, Randy! Or I warn you ... I'll start making weird sucking sounds again!"

6/15/82



"Hold it right there, stranger. We got us a hat-check law in this town ... so just take it off niiiiice and slow."

6/17/82



"Ha! Just like every time, you'll get about a hundred yards out, make a big arc, and start heading back."

6/18/82

"Grunt, snort ... grunt grunt, snort ..."

June 1982

6/11/82

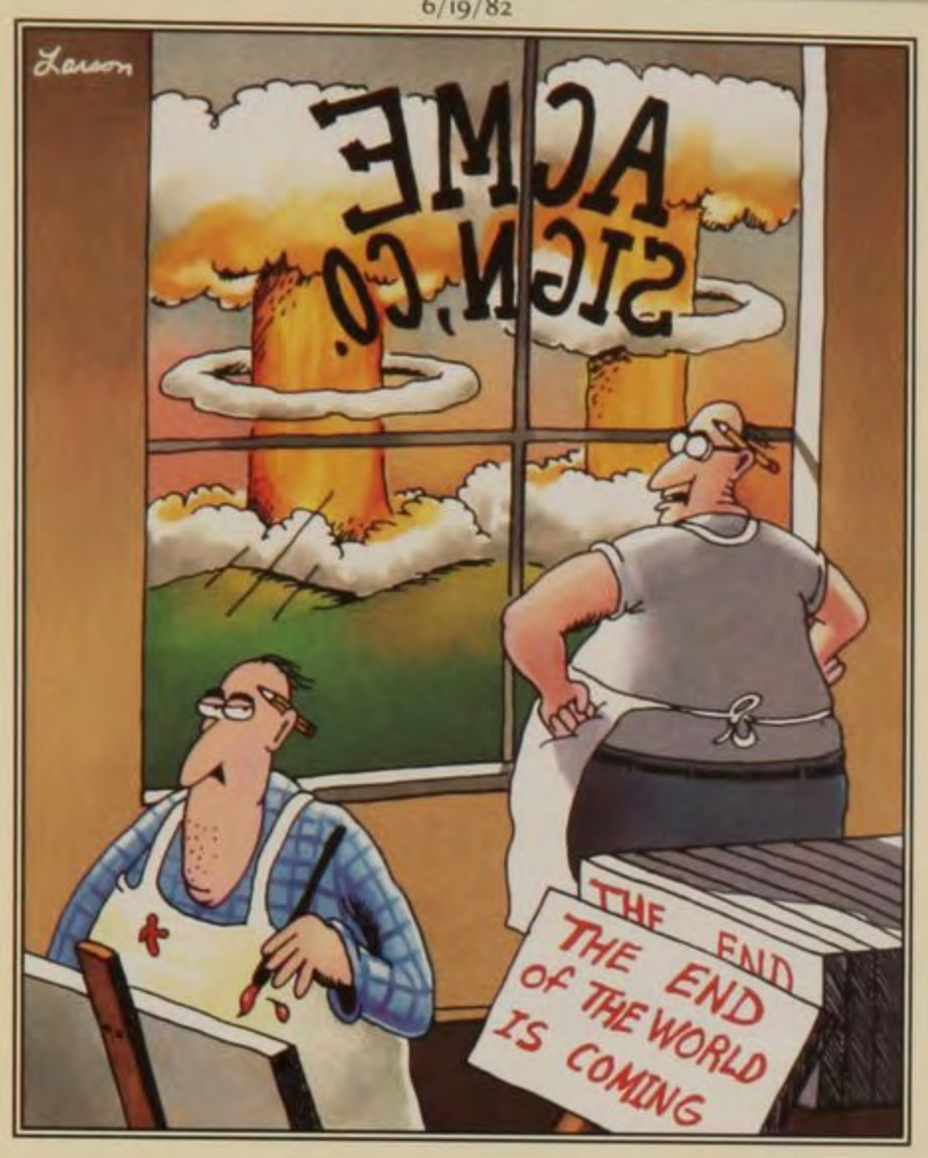
6/9/82

6/14/82

"Oh. Now this is from last summer, when Helen and I went to hell and back."

June 1982

6/19/82

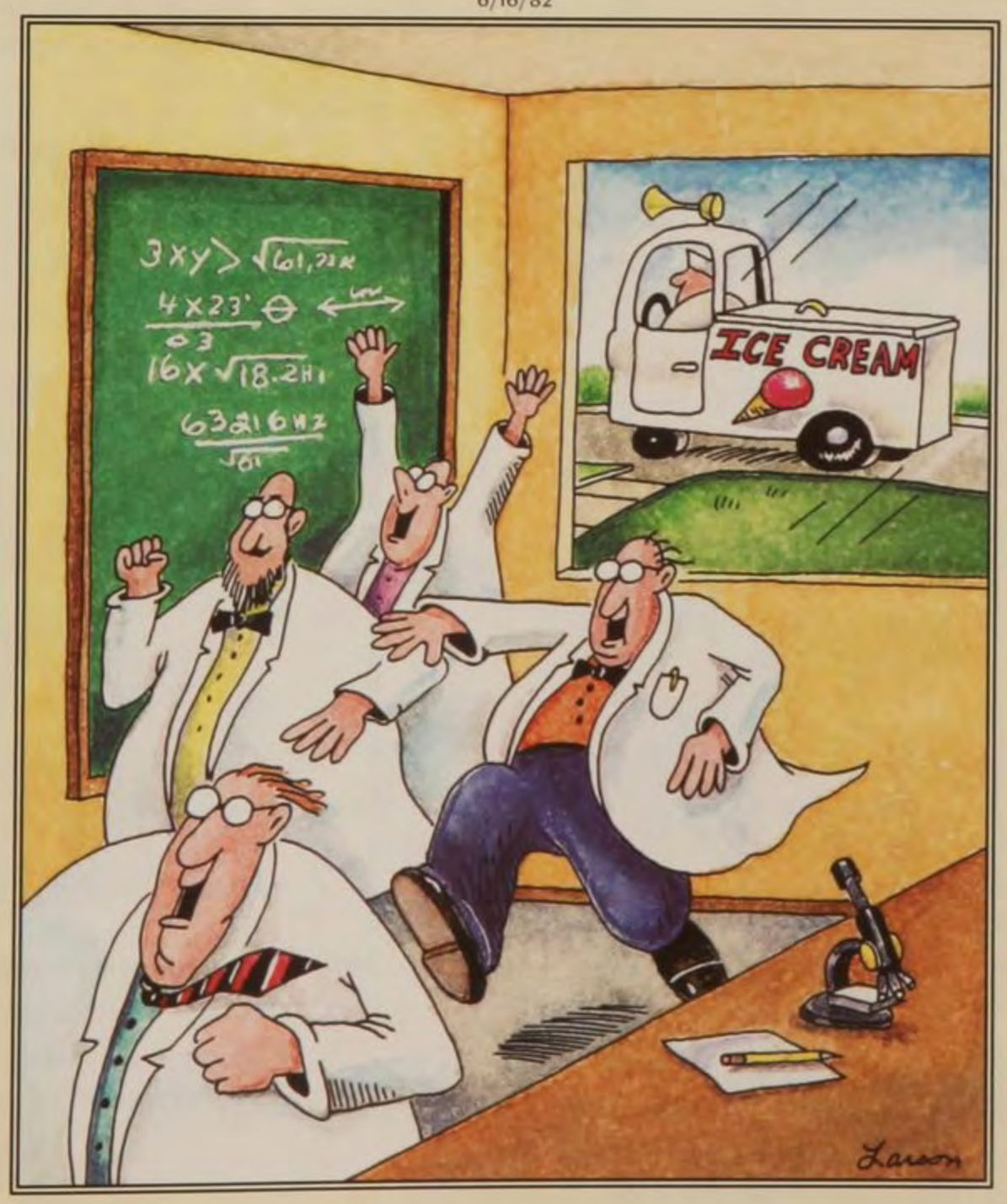


"Well, wouldn't you know it! ... There goes our market for these things!"

6/23/82

"Well, for crying out loud! ... It's Uncle Irwin from the city sewer!"

6/16/82



June 1982

6/25/82

"All right, Billy, you just go right ahead! ... I've warned you enough times about playing under the anvil tree!"

6/26/82

6/21/82

"For heaven's sake, Murray! ... We're supposed to leave in five minutes and you're not even drawn yet!"

6/22/82

"Let's see ... I guess your brother's coming over, too—better give it one more shake."

June 1982

"Well, well, King ... looks like the new neighbors have brought a friend for you, too."

"I'm sorry, Irwin. ... It's your breath. It's ... it's fresh and minty."

Left to right: Old Man Winter, River, and Higgins

"I assume you're being facetious, Andrews. ... I distinctly yelled 'second!' before you did."

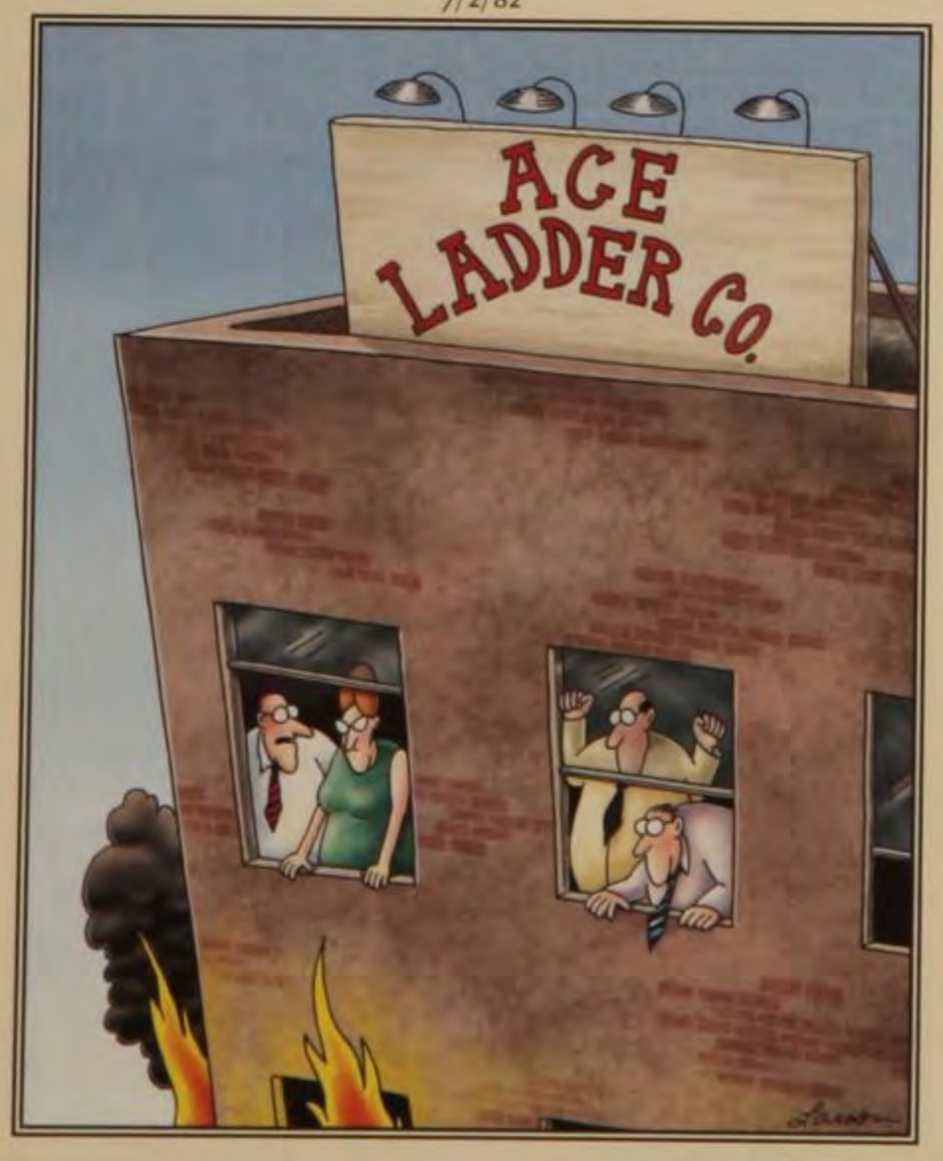
July 1982

7/1/82

7/3/82

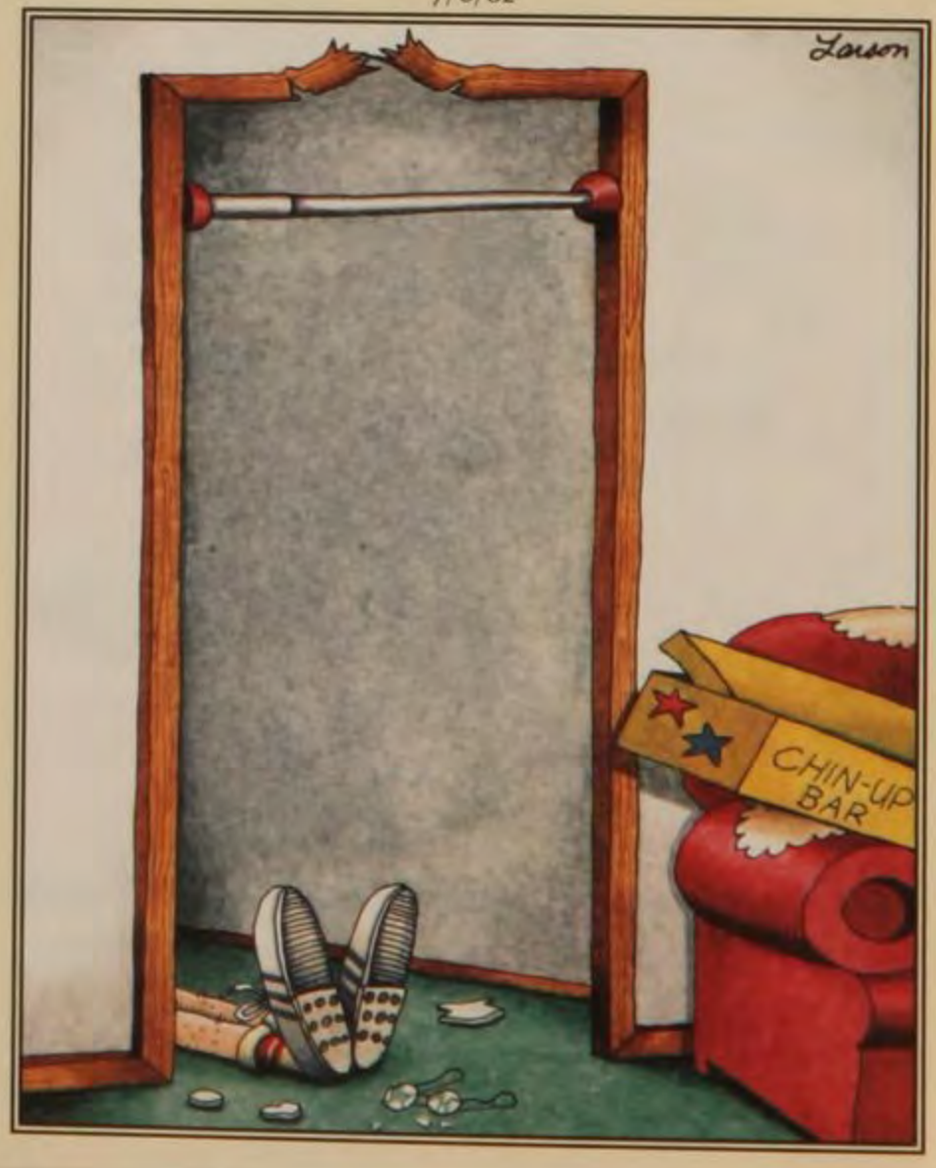
"Well, I dunno. ... Okay, sounds good to me."

7/2/82



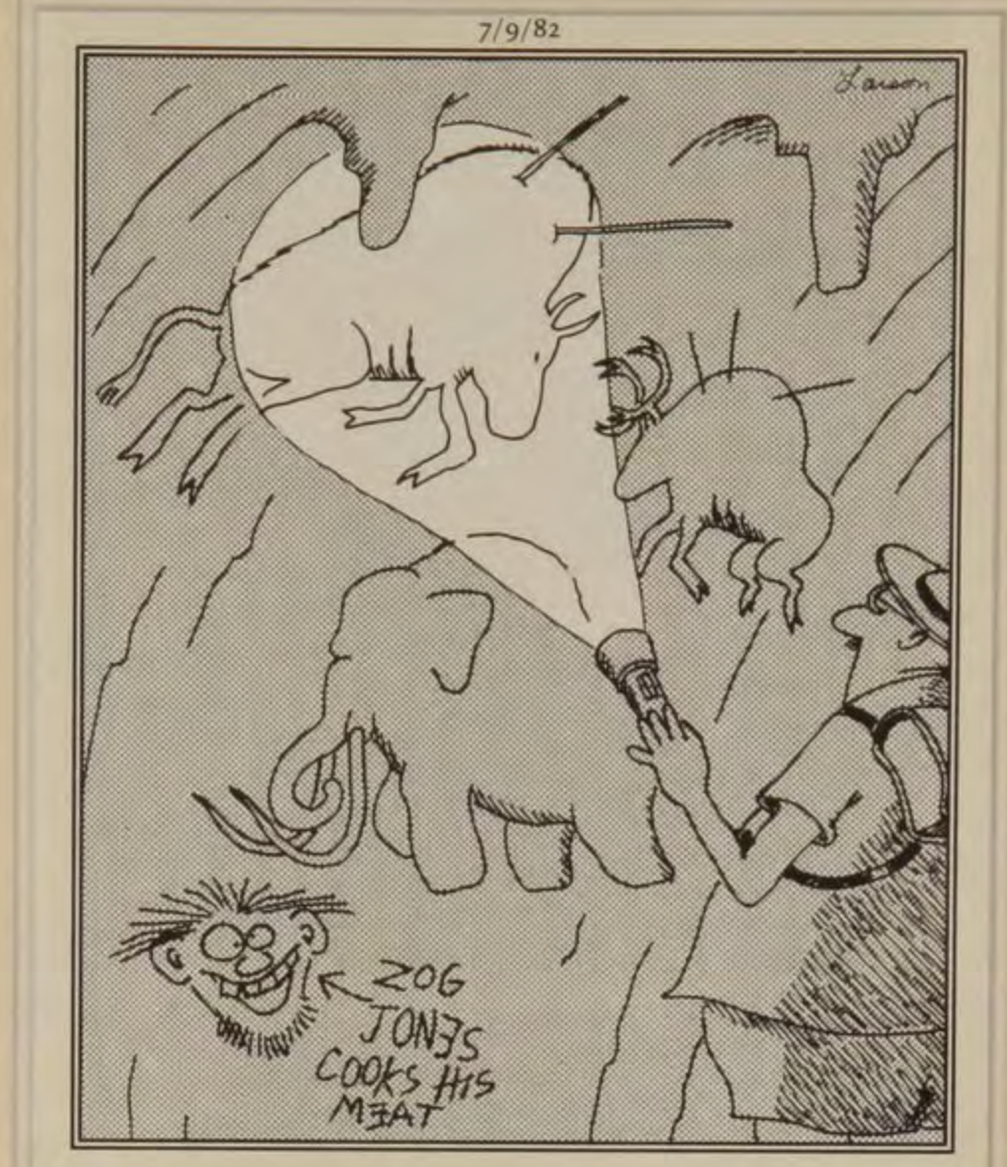
"Wait a minute! Say that again, Doris! ... You know, the part about 'If only we had some means of climbing down.'"

7/6/82



July 1982

The African rhino: an animal with little or no sense of humor.



"Hello, Emily. This is Gladys Murphy up the street. Fine, thanks. ... Say, Emily, could you go to your window and describe what's in my front yard?"

July 1982

7/8/82

"I'm sorry, but we haven't any room. ...
You'll have to sleep in the house."

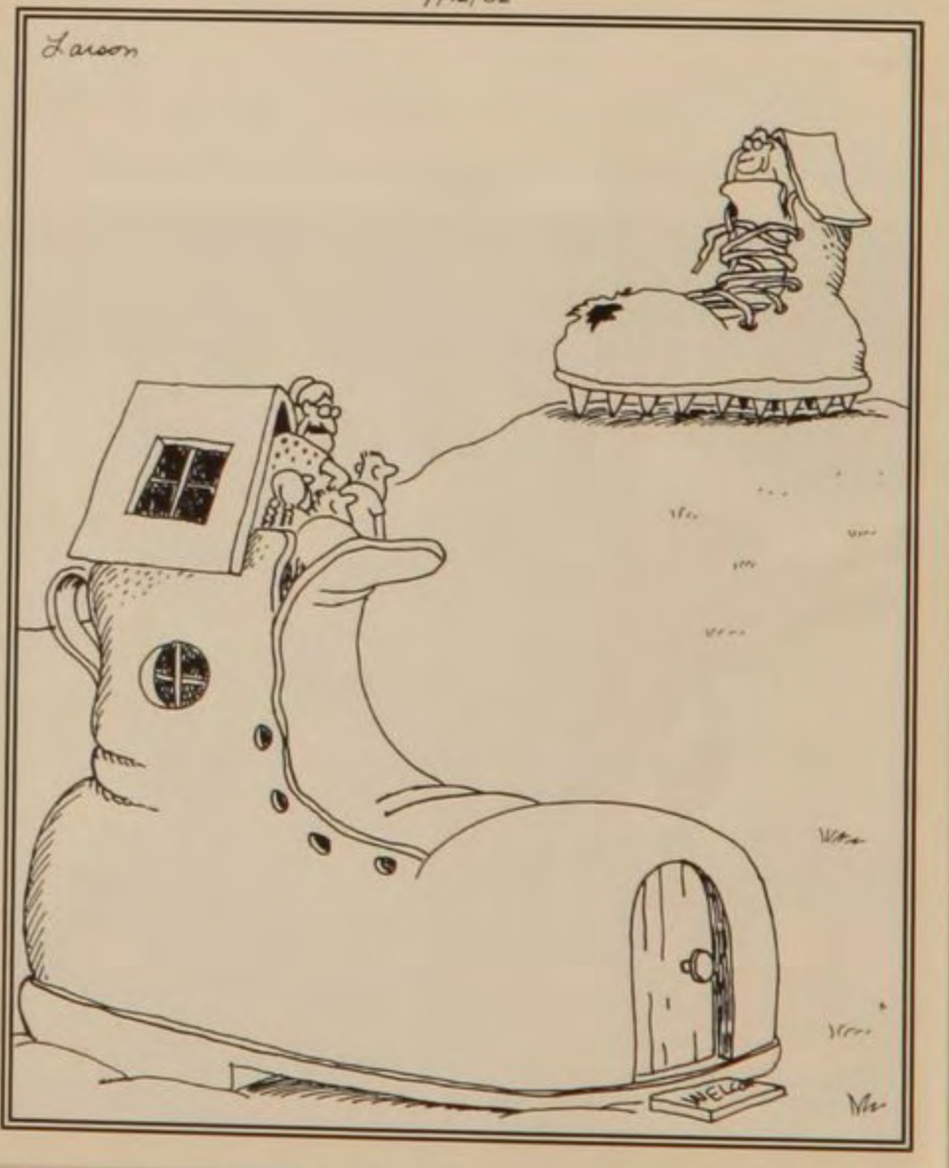
7/15/82

"FOCUS! ... FOCUS!"

7/10/82

"No, no, no! Now, try it again! ... Remember,
this is our one and only ticket out of here!"

7/12/82



"Now don't you kids forget—stay away from
old Mr. Weatherby's place."

July 1982

7/17/82

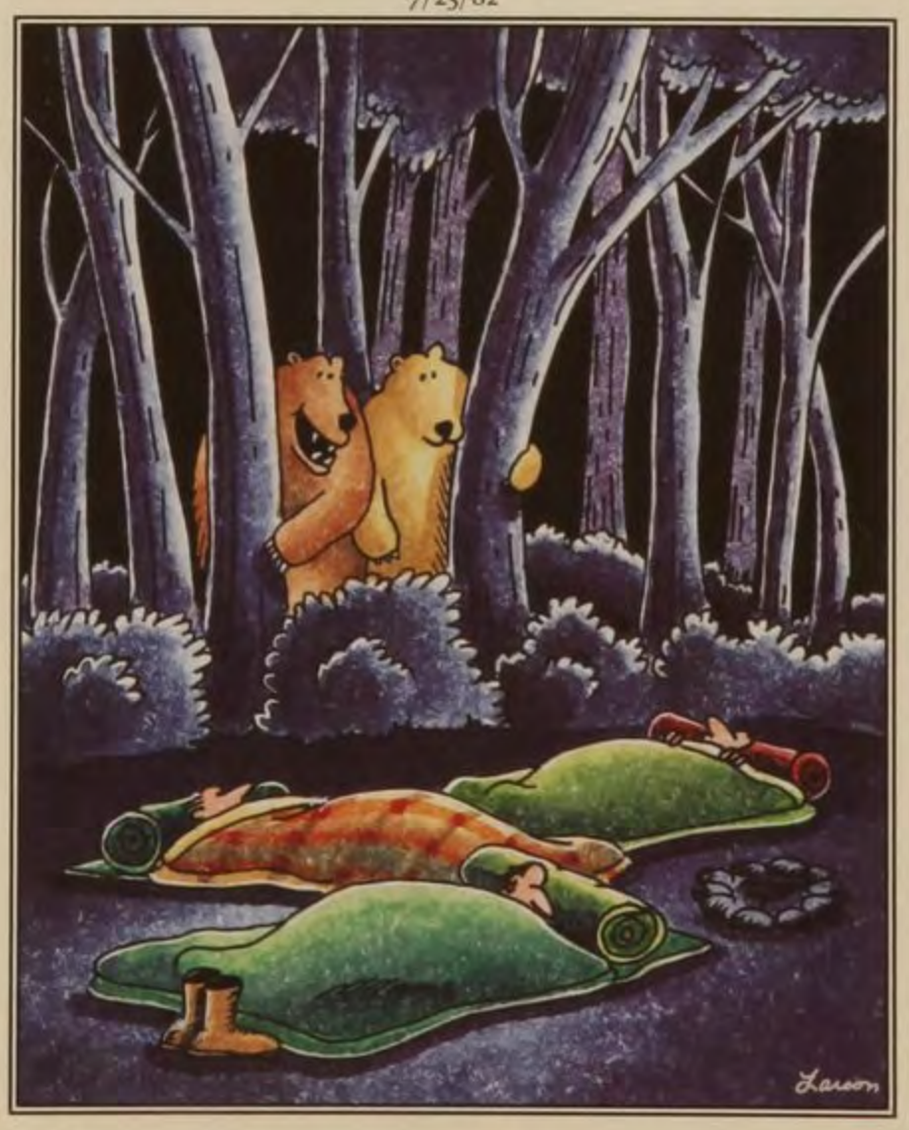
My dinner with Andy

7/14/82

"Oh, please, oh, please, Dad! ...
The little brown one!"

7/20/82

7/23/82



"Sandwiches!"

July 1982

The duck relays

Young Jimmy Frankenstein

"Crimony! ... It seems like every summer there's more and more of these things around!"

July 1982

7/16/82

"Well, here they come. ... You locked the keys inside, you do the talkin'."

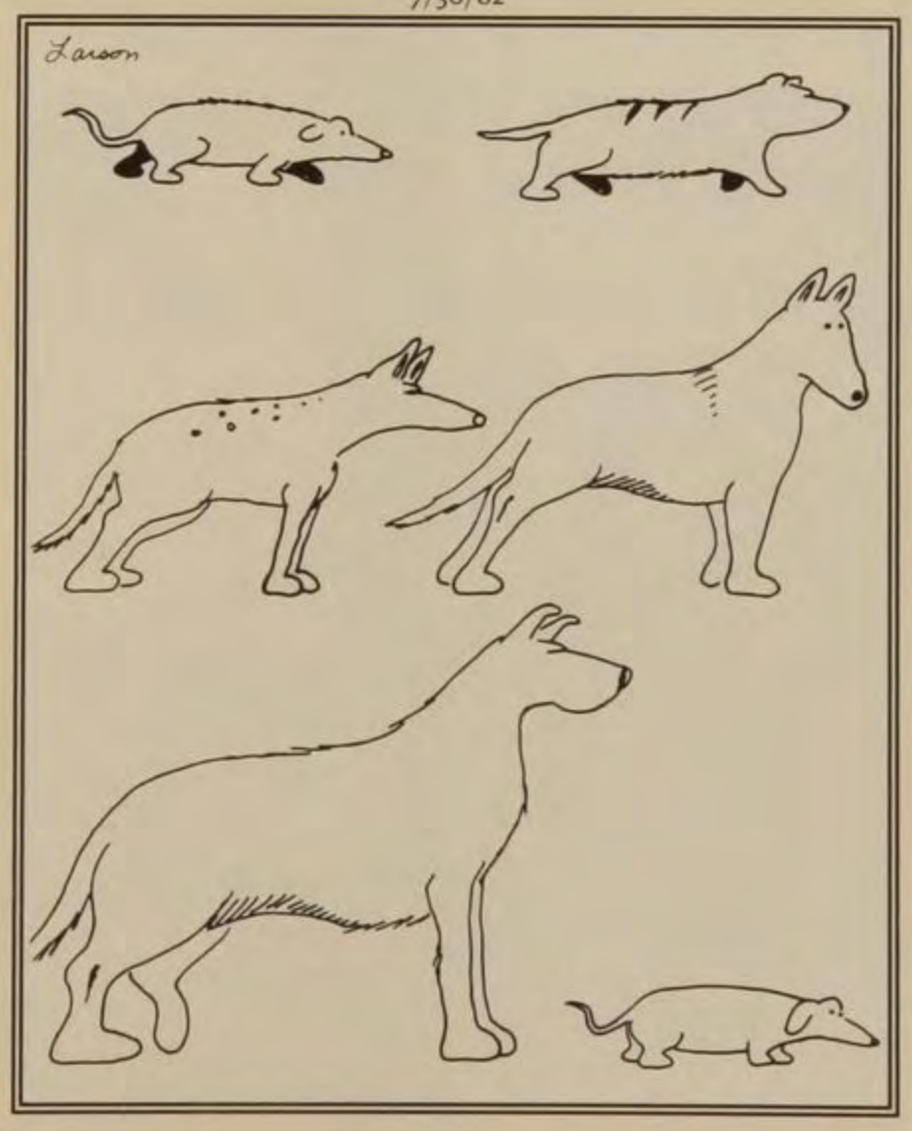
7/27/82

"Blast it, Henry! ... I think the dog is following us."

7/26/82

Historic note: Until his life's destiny was further clarified, Robin Hood spent several years robbing from the rich and giving to the porcupines.

7/30/82



Evolution of the dog

July 1982

7/29/82

"DOWN IN FRONT! ... SIT DOWN! ... SIT DOWN!"

7/28/82

In the days before television

7/31/82

Late at night, and without permission, Reuben would often enter the nursery and conduct experiments in static electricity.

August 1982

8/2/82

"Listen out there! We're George and Harriet Miller! We just dropped in on the pigs for coffee! We're coming out! ... We don't want trouble!"

8/5/82

"So, then ... would that be 'us the people' or 'we the people'?"

8/6/82

August 1982

8/3/82

"Just jump, fool! ... You don't have to go, 'Boing, boing, boing!'"

8/9/82

8/7/82

"General! Quick! Look! ... Henderson is doing it again!"

8/11/82

"Excuse me, but the others sent me up here to ask you to please not roll around so much."

August 1982

"Say ... now *I'm* starting to feel kinda warm!"

"Step on it, Arnold! STEP ON IT!"

"Heeeeeere, yakity yak yak yak! ...
Come, come, yakity yak yak yak!"

Professor E. F. Gizmo and some of
his many inventions

August 1982

8/12/82

Loch Ness mobsters

8/13/82

8/20/82

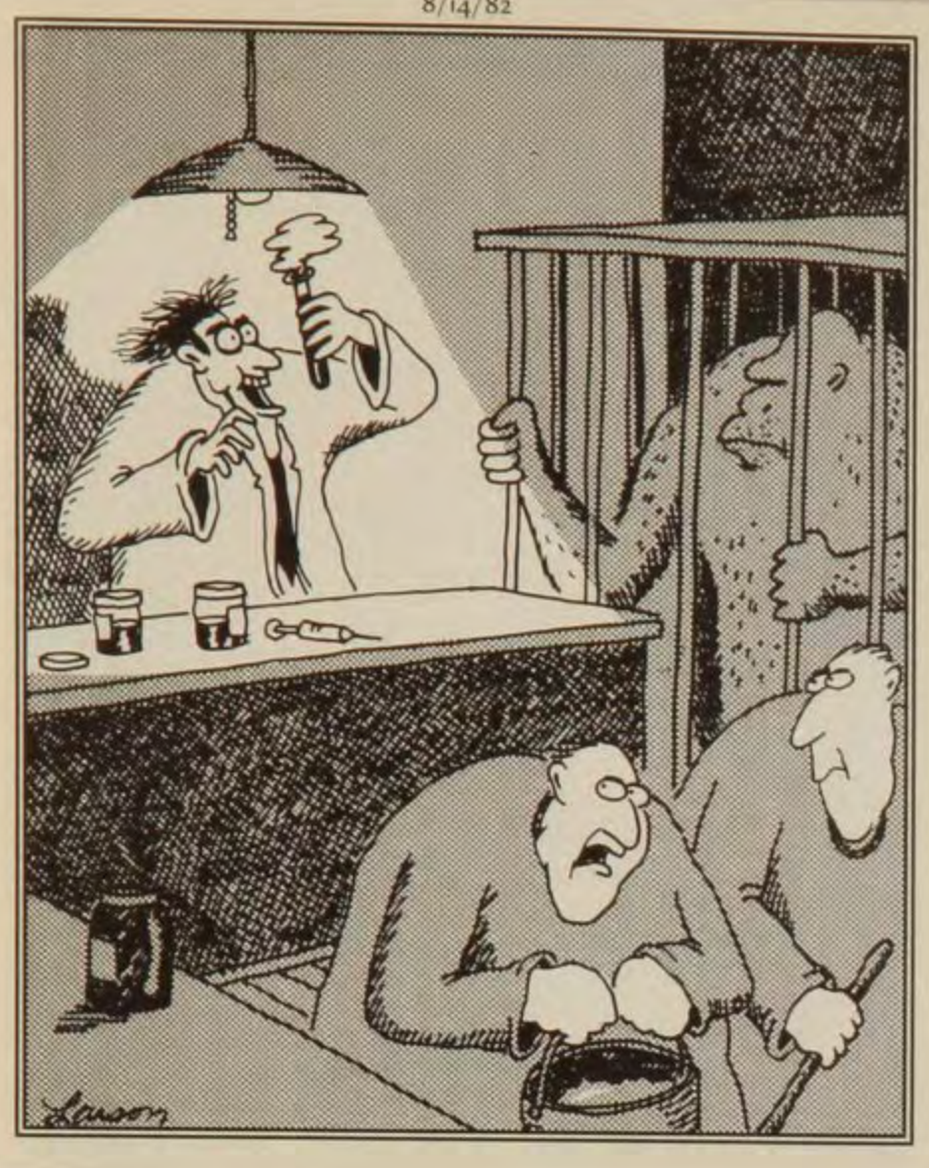
"I say fifty, maybe a hundred horses. ...
What you say, Red Eagle?"

8/19/82

"You know, we're just not reaching that guy."

August 1982

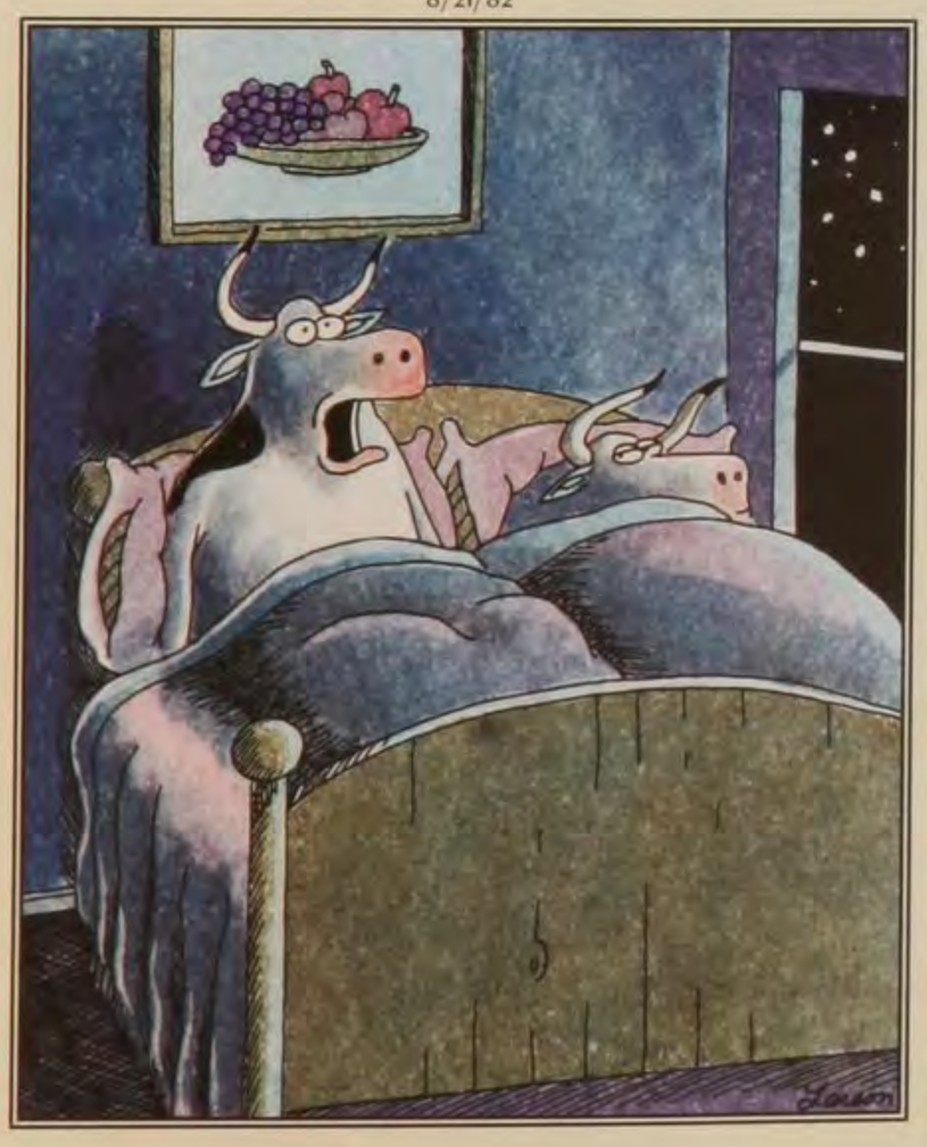
8/14/82



"Somethin's in the air, Carl. ... The doc's gettin' that old twinkle in his eye again."

8/17/82

8/21/82



"THE GOLDEN ARCHES! ...
THE GOLDEN ARCHES GOT ME!"

8/24/82

Inevitably, their affair ended: Howard worried excessively about what the pack would think, and Agnes simply ate the flowers.

August 1982

8/23/82

"Look! Look, gentlemen! Purple mountains!
Spacious skies! Fruited plains! ...
Is someone writing this down?"

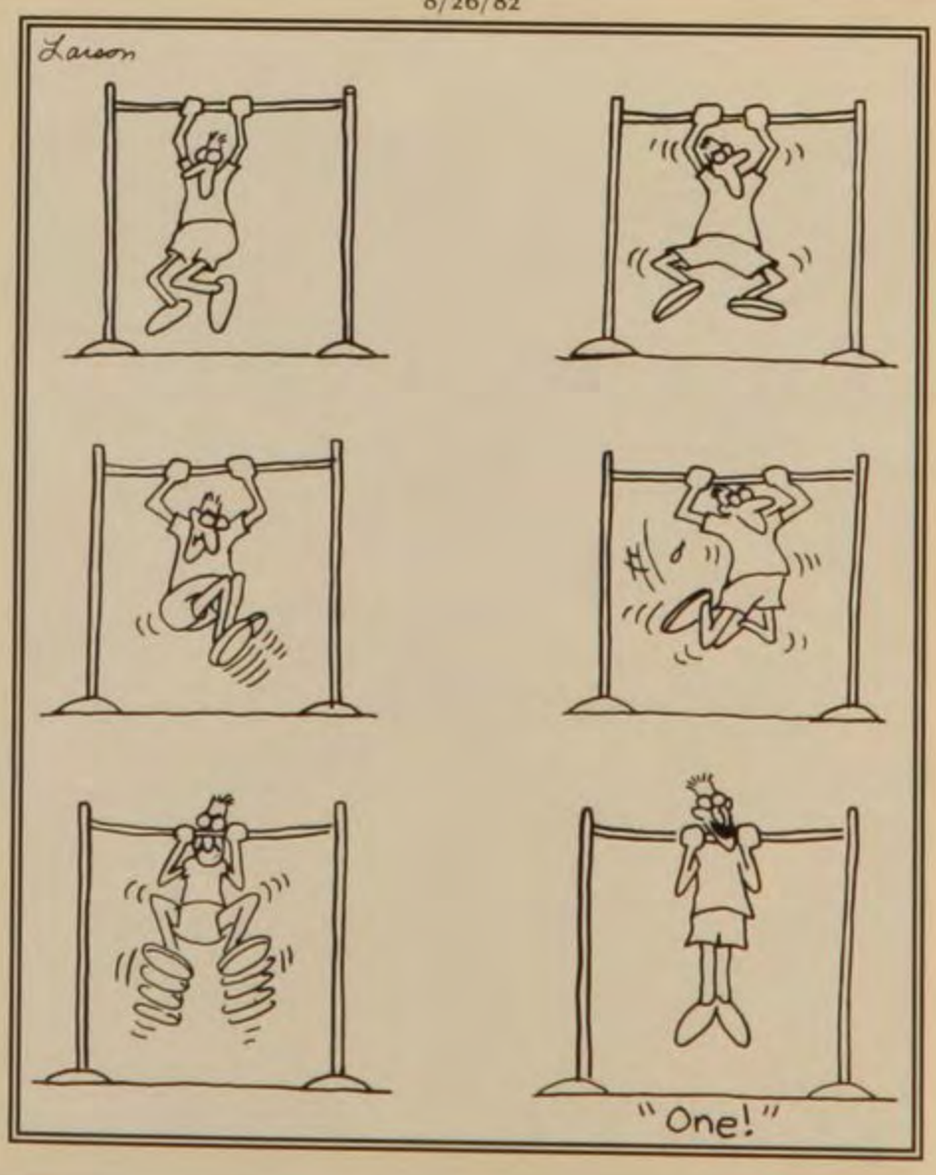
8/28/82

"And notice, gentlemen, the faster I go, the
more Simmons sounds like a motorboat."

8/25/82

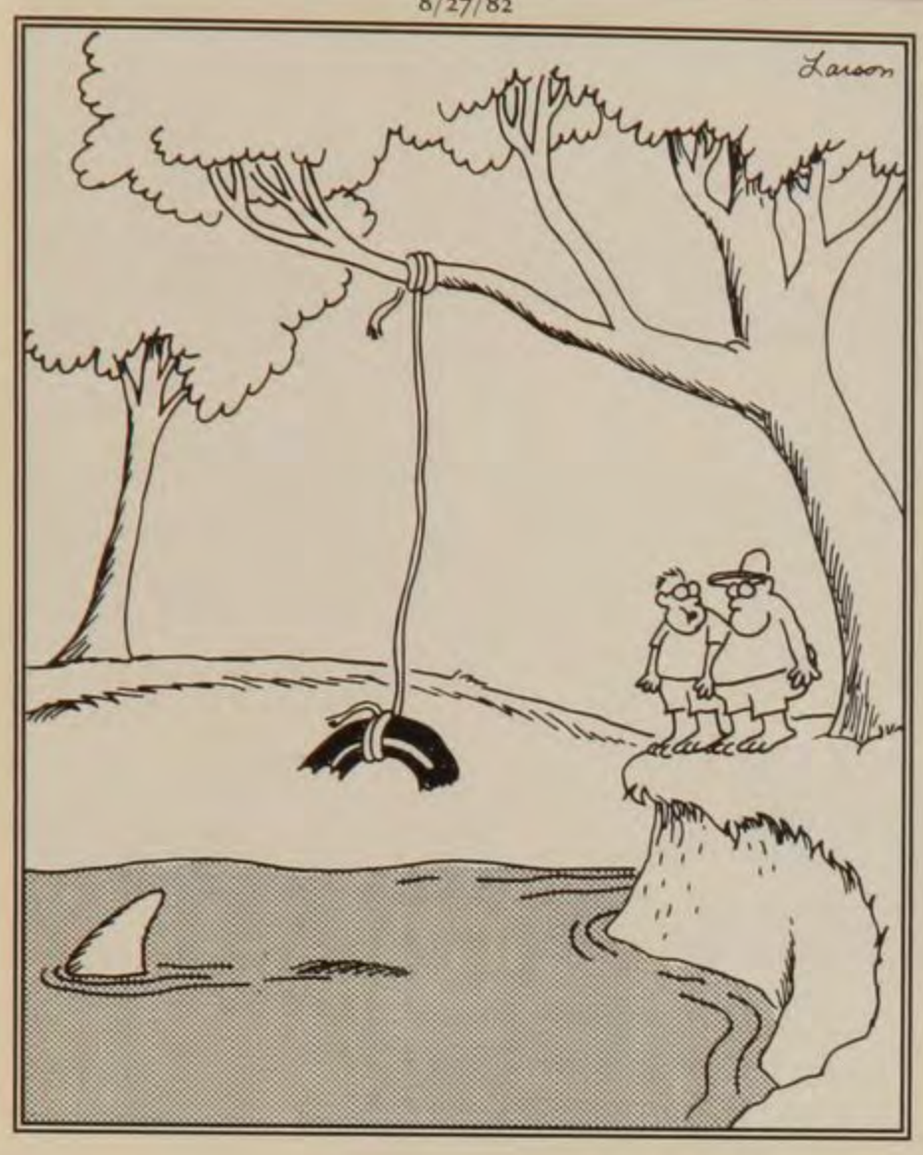
"And now there go the Wilsons! ... Seems
like everyone's evolving except us!"

8/26/82



August 1982

8/27/82



"Listen ... you go tell Billy's mother, and I'll start looking for another old tire."

8/31/82

Things that go bump in the night

8/30/82

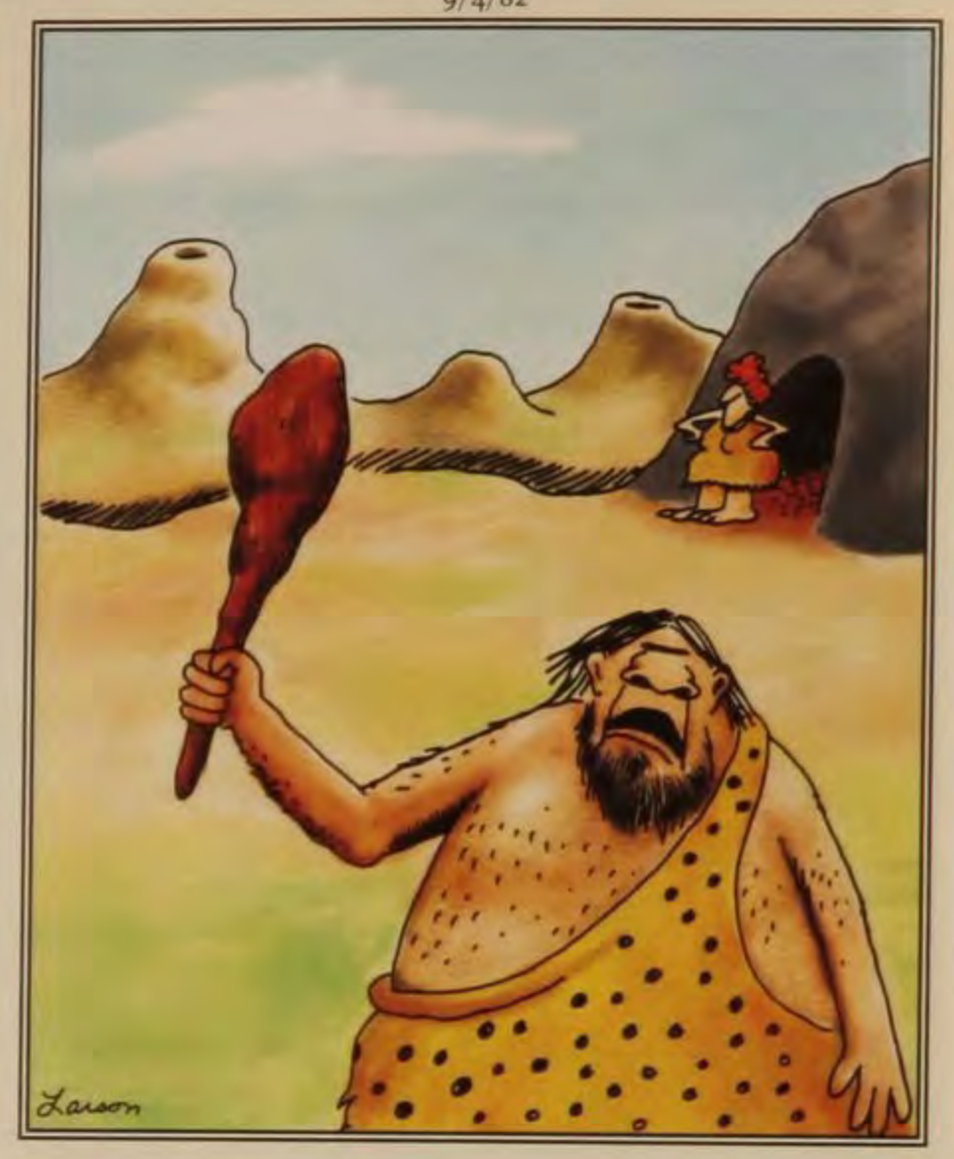
"Mom! Dad! ... The nose fairy left me a whole quarter!"

September 1982

9/1/82

"Uh-oh, Lorraine ... someone seems to be checking you out."

9/4/82



"Do you know me? I have to deal with lions, wolves, and saber-toothed tigers. ... That's why I carry one of *these*."

9/2/82

"Hey! Hey, you idiots! The train has stopped! ... Come on down from there!"

9/3/82

September 1982

The embarrassment of "morning face"

"Good heavens, Stuart! ... We're definitely going to need the net!"

Nature's subtle signs of danger

September 1982

9/9/82

"Now here comes the barbaric finale."

9/11/82

"*Now* you've got him, Vinnie!"

9/7/82

"FREEZE! ... Okay, now ... who's the brains of this outfit?"

9/16/82

"YEEEEEHAAAAAAAAA!"

9/13/82

"The fool! ... He's on the keyboard!"

9/17/82

"Satisfied? ... I warned you not to invite the cows in for a few drinks."

September 1982

"So, Mr. Fenton ... let's begin with your mother."

"Well, Emily is out like a light. ... Just can't resist pulling that little stunt of yours, can you, Earl?"

And then, from across the room, their eyes met.

"Shhhh, Zog! ... Here come one now!"

September 1982

9/18/82

9/23/82

"Late again! ... This better be good!"

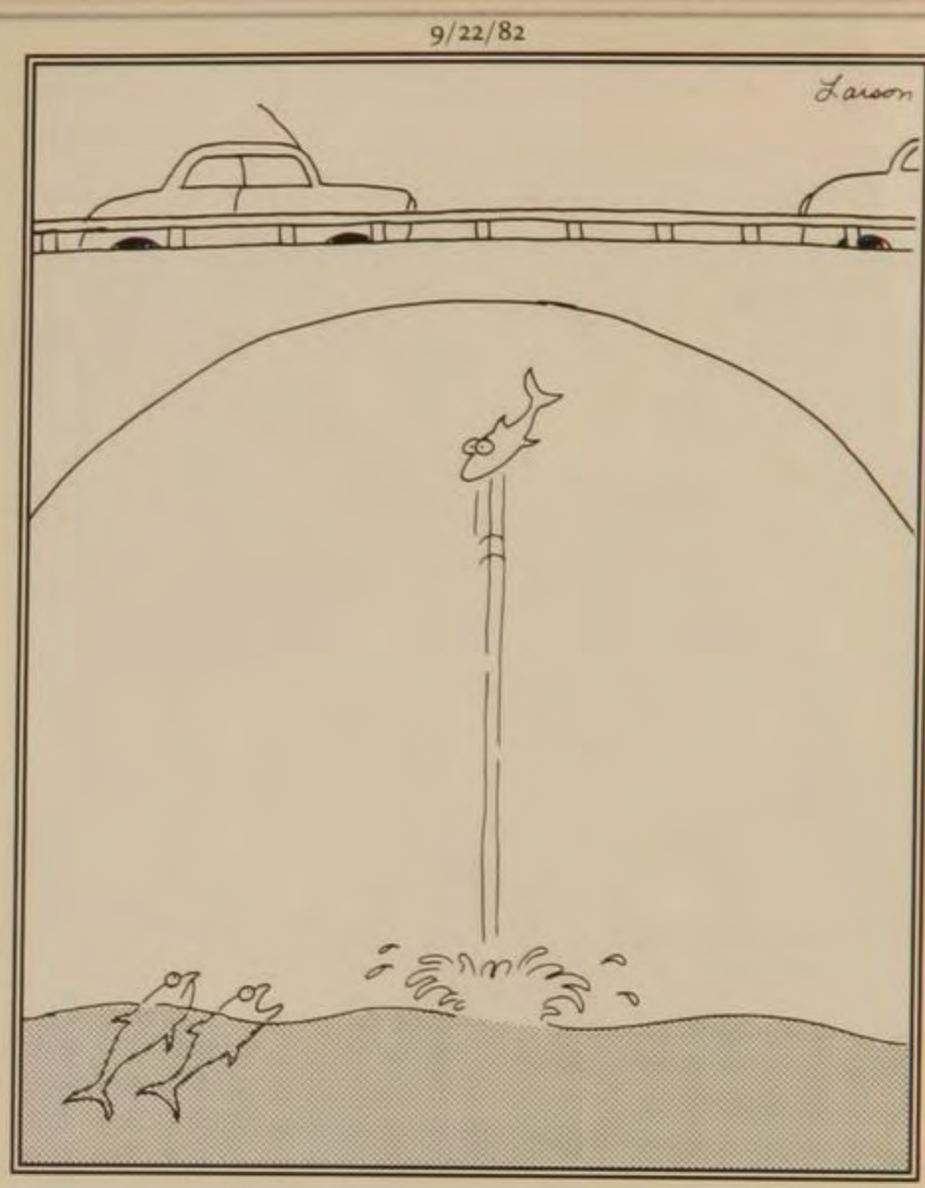
9/28/82

9/29/82

"Now take them big birds, Barnaby. ...
Never eat a thing ... just sit and stare."

September 1982

"Verrrrrrry good, Ernie!"



"We're too late! ... He jumped!"

"AAAAAAAAA! MURRAY! ... A spider was in my shoe!"

October 1982

"Now, on to other business ...
Bjorn Jorgensen here has a new
helmet design to show us!"

"Knock it off, I said! ... This is a still life!"

"Oooooooooooooo!"

"Ha! The idiots spelled 'surrender'
with only one 'r'!"

October 1982

"Hey! They're lighting their arrows! ...
Can they *do* that?"

"This is your side of the family, you realize."

October 1982

"For heaven's sake, Andrew! ... You're not going to plug that horrible thing in, are you?"

"Raaaaaaaaaaxphooooooooorg!"

"Hang on, Betty. ... Someone's bound to see us eventually."

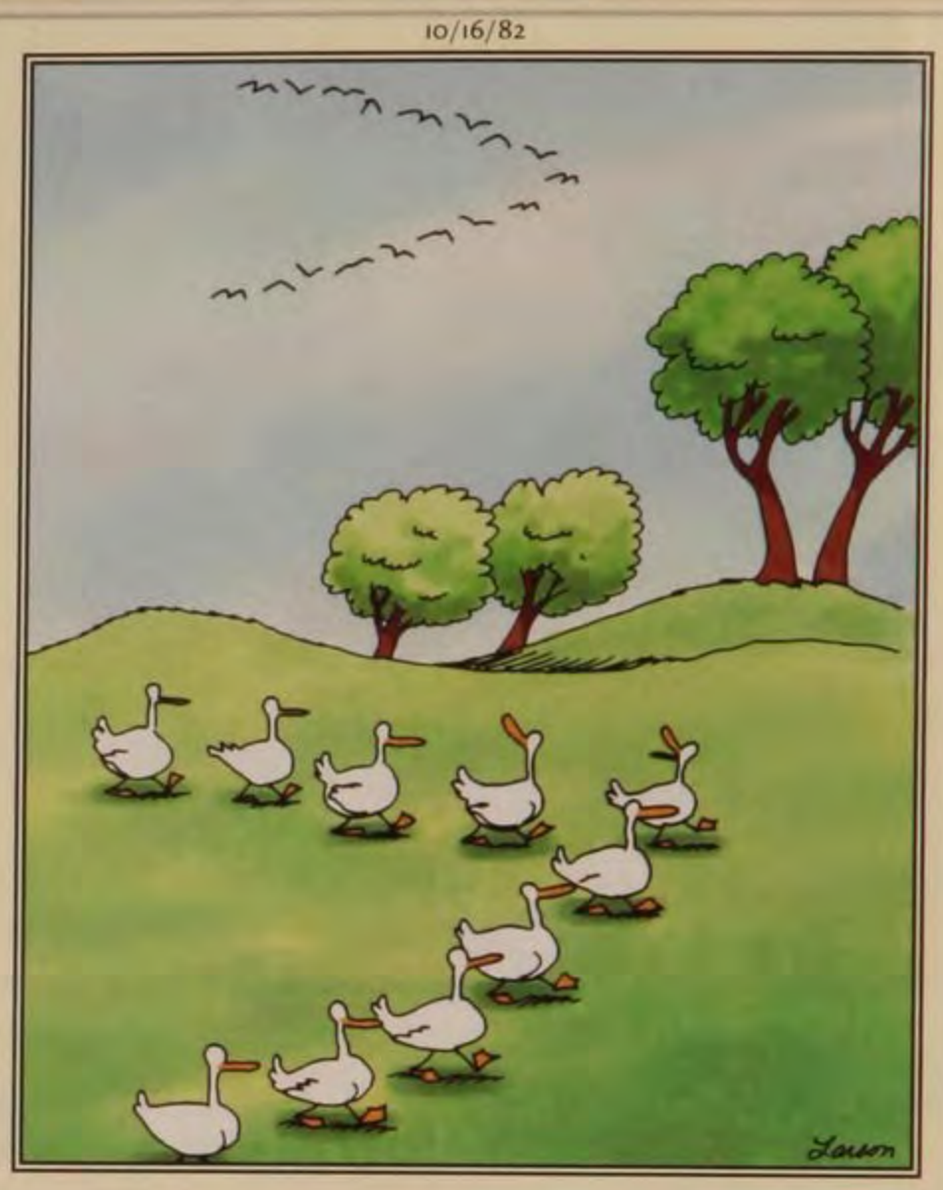
"Blasted recoil unit!"

October 1982

10/15/82

Where parakeets come from

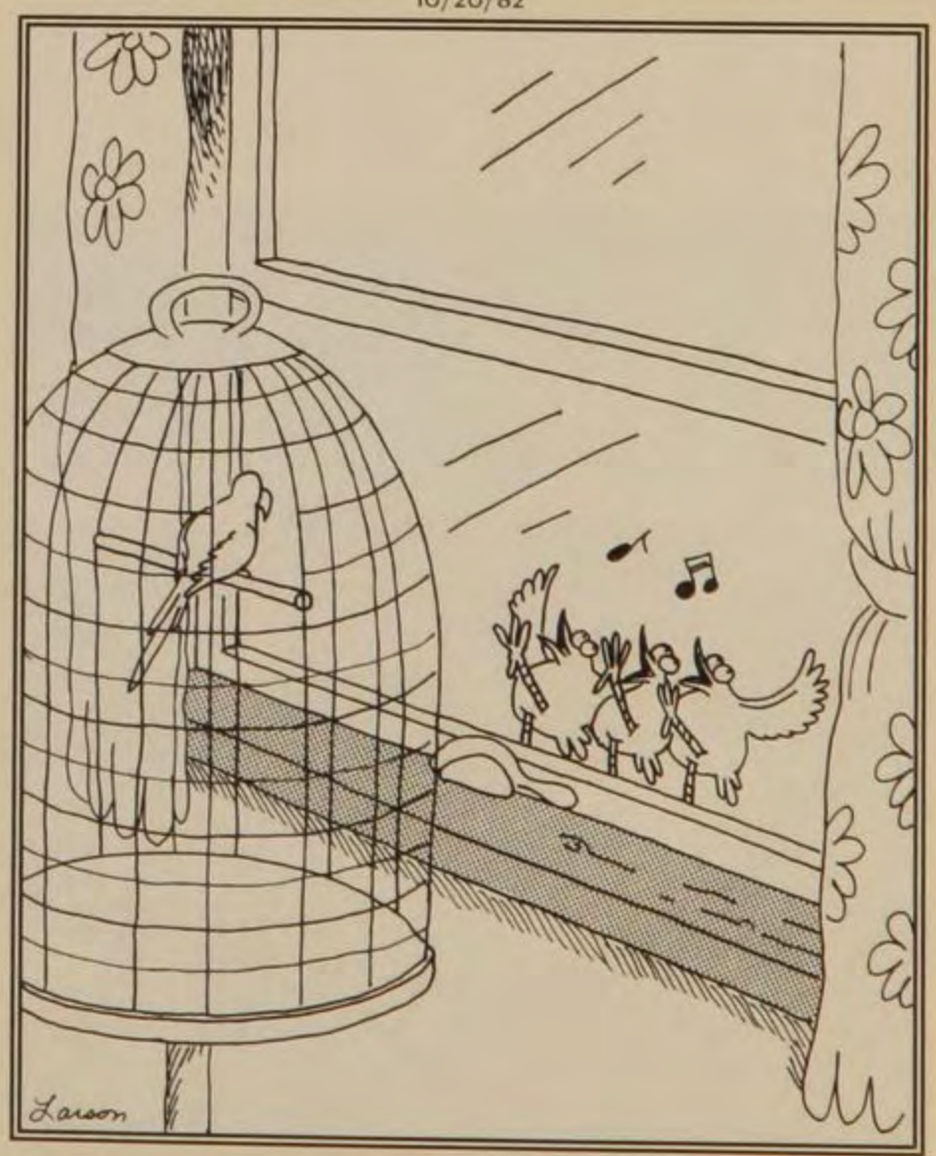
10/16/82



"Say ... look what *they're* doing."

10/18/82

10/20/82



October 1982

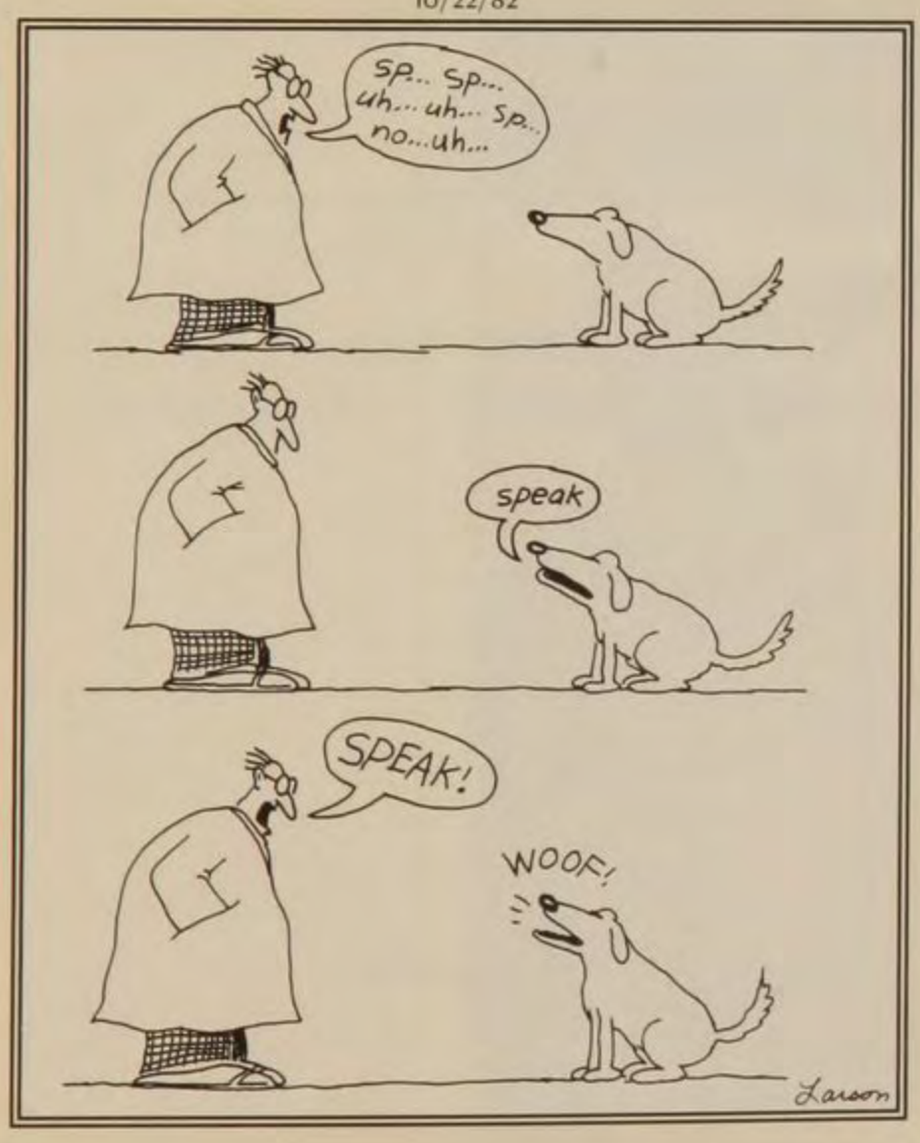
10/21/82

"RUB HIS BELLY, ERNIE! RUB HIS BELLY!"

10/19/82

"Shhhhhh ... I wanna surprise the kids."

10/22/82



10/25/82

"Well, I guess both Warren and the cat are okay. ... But thank goodness for the Heimlich maneuver!"

October 1982

10/23/82

"Let's see—mosquitoes, gnats, flies, ants ... what the? ... Those jerks! We didn't order stinkbugs on this thing!"

10/30/82

10/26/82

"Now, don't forget, Gorok! ... *This* time punch some holes in the lid!"

The Lexington Leader, Lexington, Ky., Monday, November 8, 1982

Comic too far out for 'Far Side' fans

By JODY JAFFE
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

Cow tools? It didn't make much sense to a lot of people.

Chronicle Features, the syndicate that handles Gary Larson and his *Far Side* cartoons was deluged with calls after his cartoon captioned "Cow Tools," ran in newspapers across the country. Editors and readers were begging for an explanation.

(That cartoon did not appear in *The Leader*, one of 71 papers in the U.S. and Canada which carry the *Far Side*. *Leader* editor Steve Wilson said another *Far Side* cartoon was used in its place "because we didn't understand the gag.")

"The phone never stopped ringing for two days," said Chronicle Features general manager Stuart Dodds, between chuckles about the whole mess. Dodds said he got the joke right off.

"It didn't seem like the greatest joke that Gary had made," Dodds said. "Those who didn't get it were searching for far-fetched explanations. Further than Gary's wildest thoughts."

But that's not the worst of it. Larson's own mother, Doris, didn't get the joke.

"She said, 'Dear, I don't think I quite understood this one,' " Larson said in a telephone interview from his home in Seattle. (Doris Larson, according to her son, understands most of his off-beat jokes, "except for these occasional slip ups.")

After countless explanations to countless *Far Side* fans, Dodds decided to go public with the punchline. For the first time in Chronicle Features history, it sent out letters of explanation by the cartoonist to all 71 newspapers that carry Larson's daily cartoon.

"This cartoon was meant as an exercise in silliness," Larson wrote.

"I've never met a cow who could make tools, but if I had, I feel sure that its efforts would lack something in sophistication and would resemble the crude specimens shown in the cartoon."

That's it, folks, the punchline: If cows could build tools, those are the kind they'd build.

For those who want further explanation, read on. Larson came up with the joke after remembering a definition of mankind: one of the things that separates human beings from animals is that humans can build tools.

"I started thinking of well ... cows," said Larson, who at one time, worked at a humane society. "I like cows. I just think there's almost something intrinsically humorous about them. I even just like the name 'cow.'

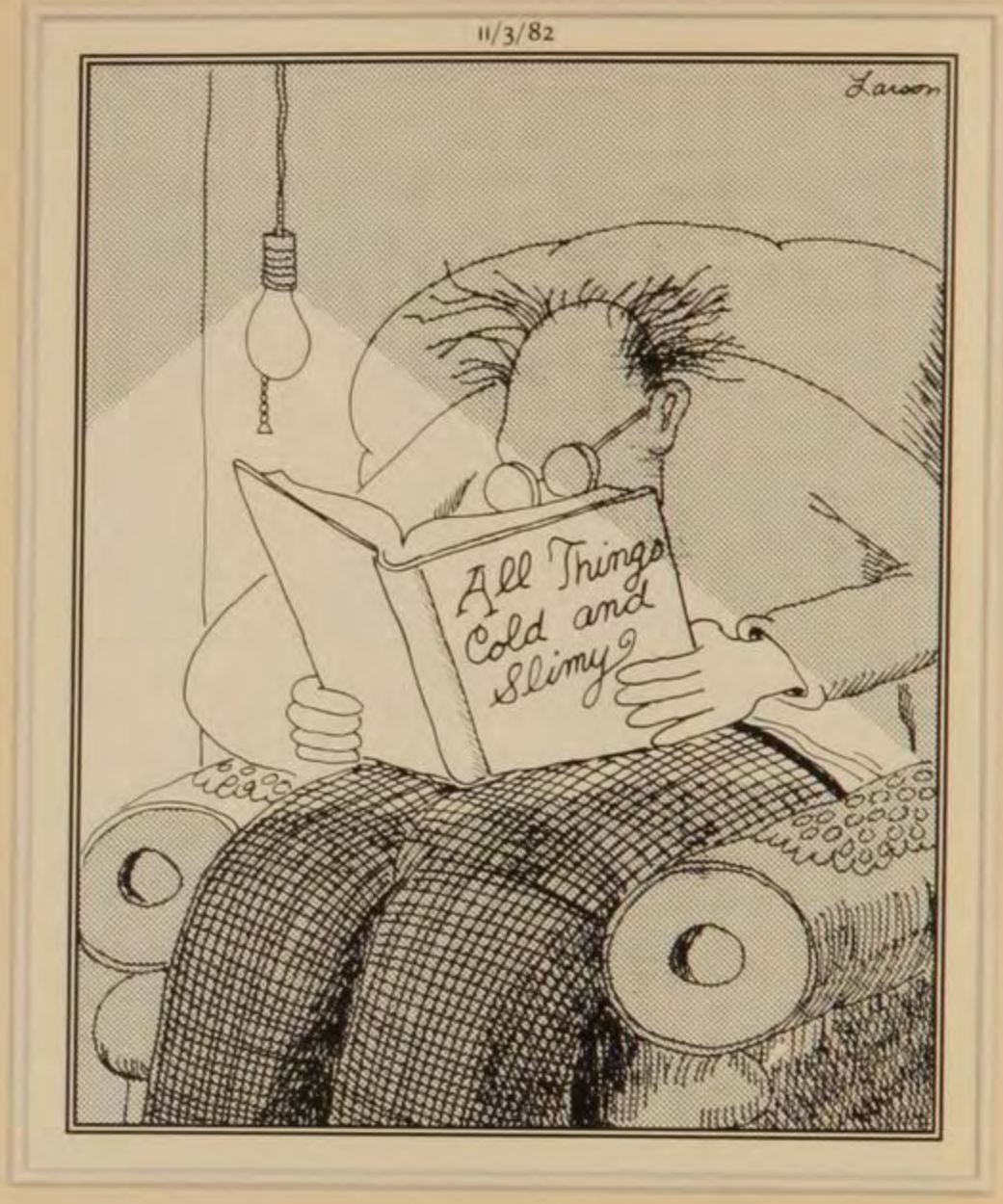
"I thought obviously cows don't make tools, but if they did, they would look like this. At the time I thought it was hysterical ... Wrong."

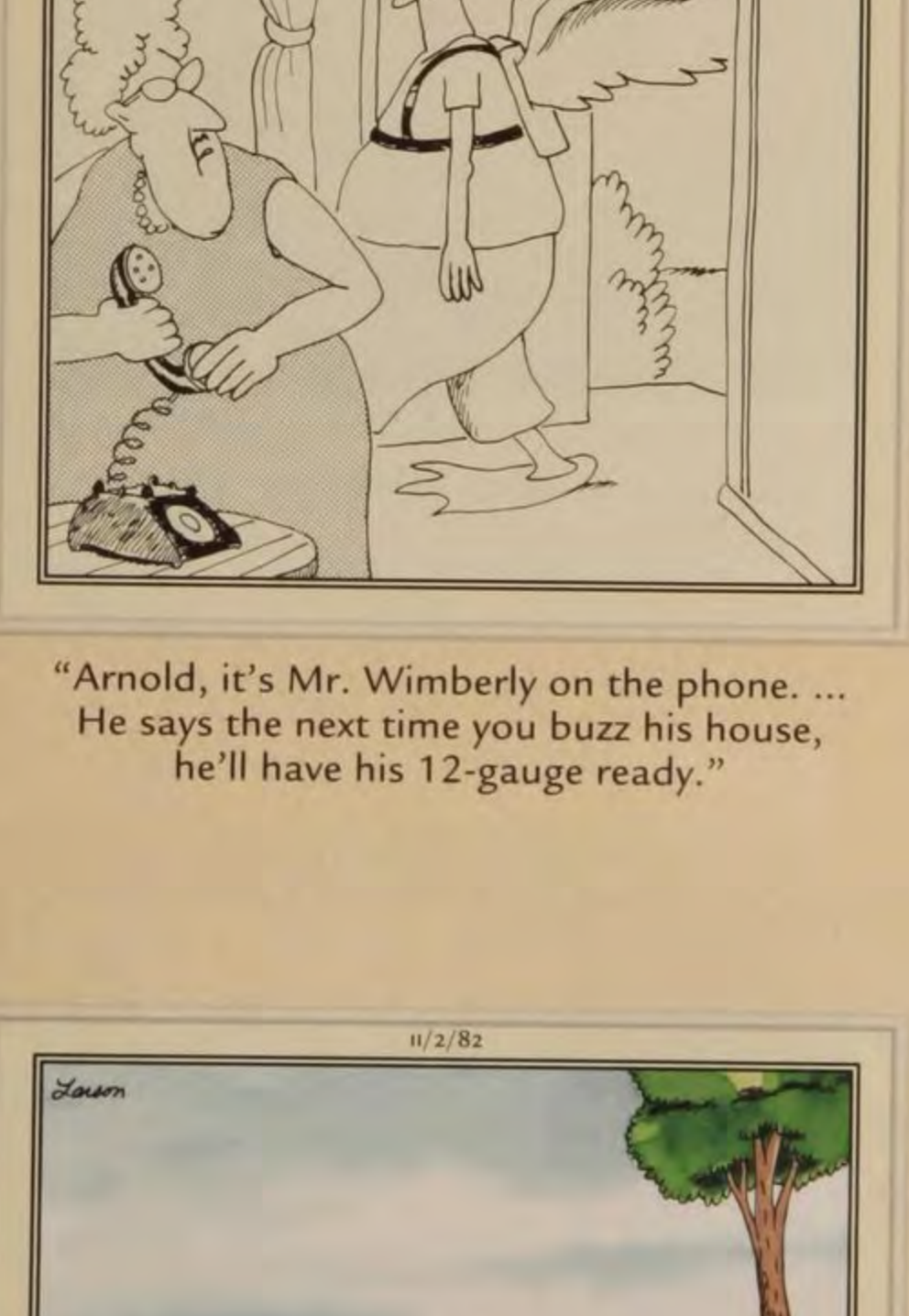
Cow tools

"Stop the swing! I'm getting sick! Stop the swing! Oongowa! Oongowa!"

November 1982

"Arnold, it's Mr. Wimberly on the phone. ...
He says the next time you buzz his house,
he'll have his 12-gauge ready."





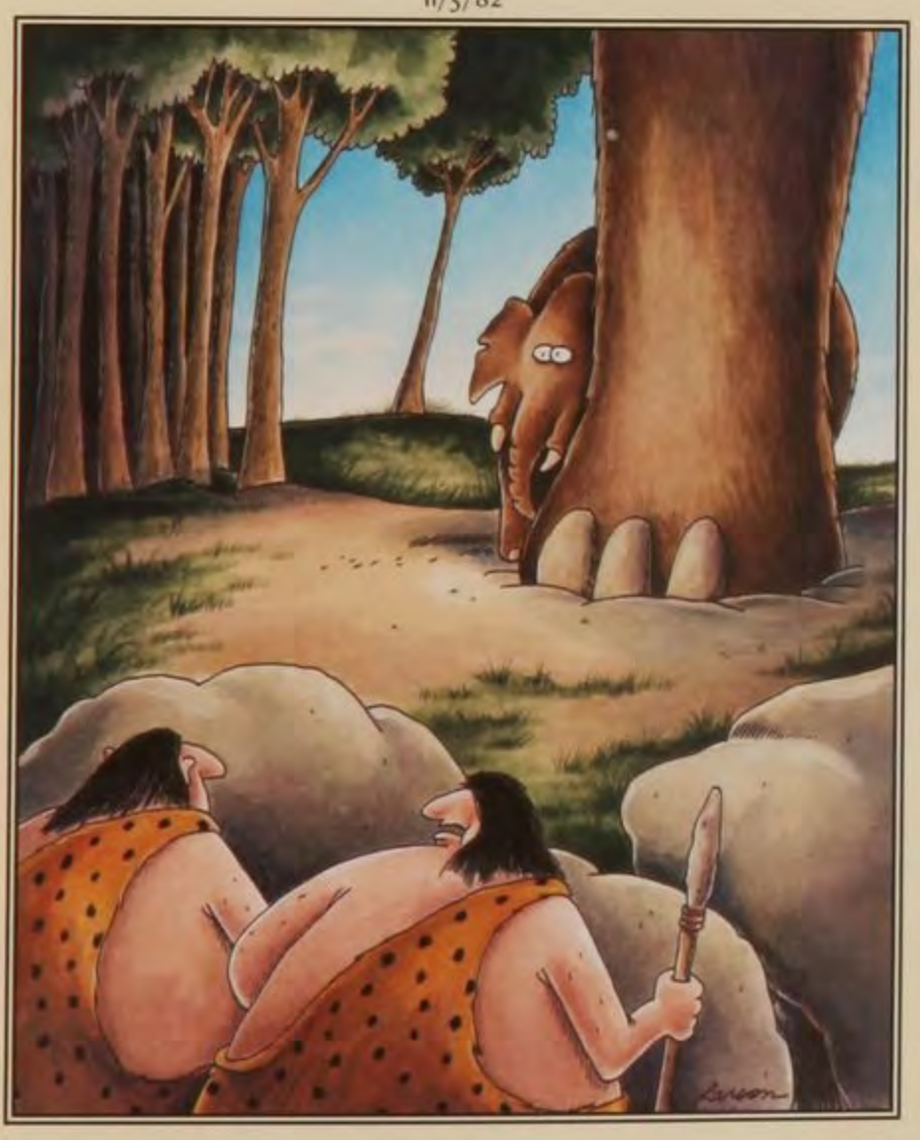
"Wait! Wait! Listen to me! ... We don't
have to be just sheep!"

"Why ... yes ... thank ... you ... I ... would ...
like ... a ... knuckle ... sandwich."

November 1982

"Good heavens, Ronald! ... I think something just landed on the roof!"

"I'm sorry, Margaret, but it's time I spread my wings and said goodbye."

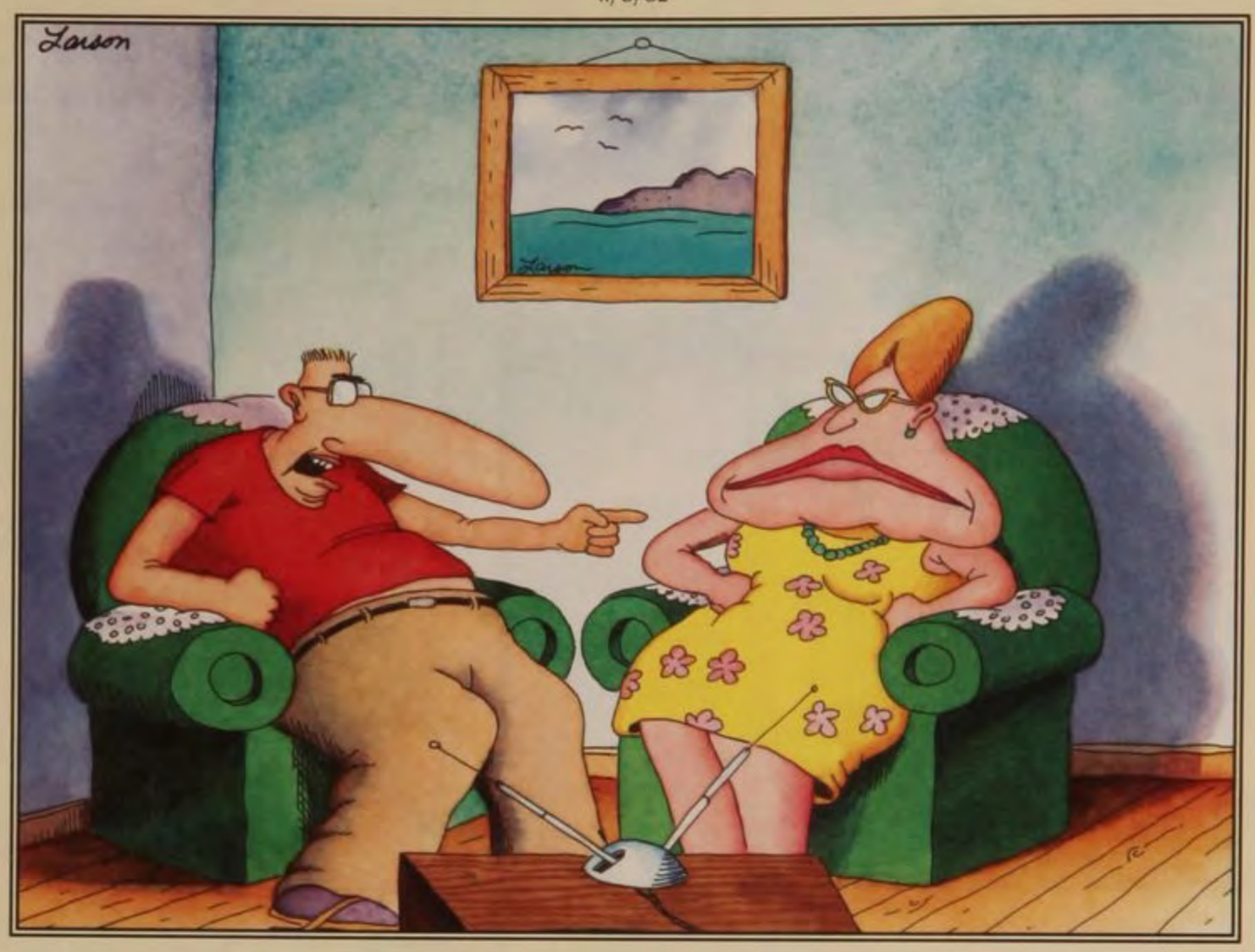


"Ha! We got him now!"

"I knew it! I just knew it. ... 'Shave and a Haircut' was a lousy secret knock."

November 1982

11/8/82



"Oh! Is that so? ... Well, *you've* got a big *mouth!*"

11/12/82

11/13/82

"Well, once again, here we are."

November 1982

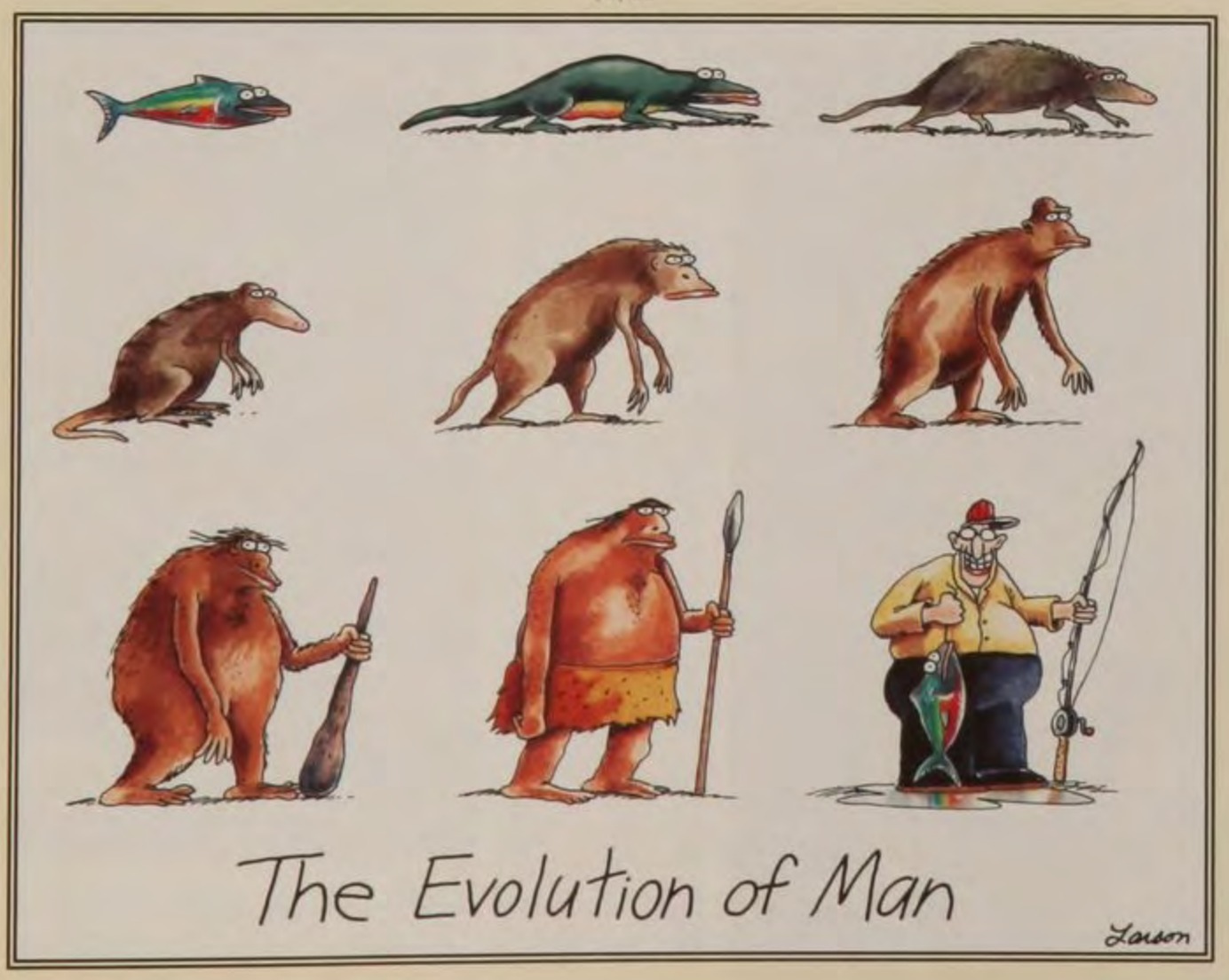
11/15/82

"Say ... wait just a dang minute, here. ...
We forgot the cattle!"

11/22/82

"I just don't like it, Al. ... Whenever Billy goes outside, the new neighbors seem compelled to watch every little thing he does."

11/11/82



November 1982

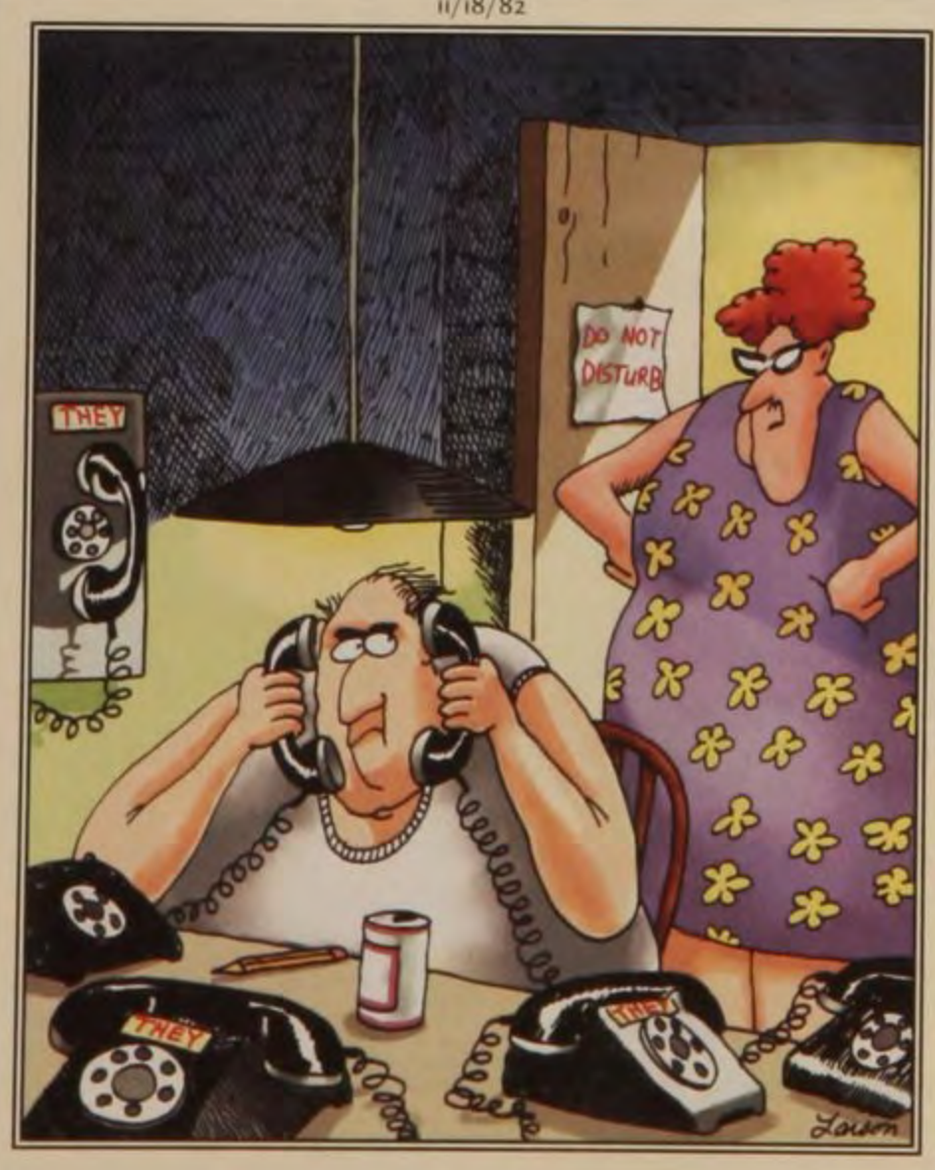
11/16/82

"'Looks like a trap,' I said. 'Nonsense,' you said. 'No one would set a trap way out here in the woods,' you said."

11/17/82

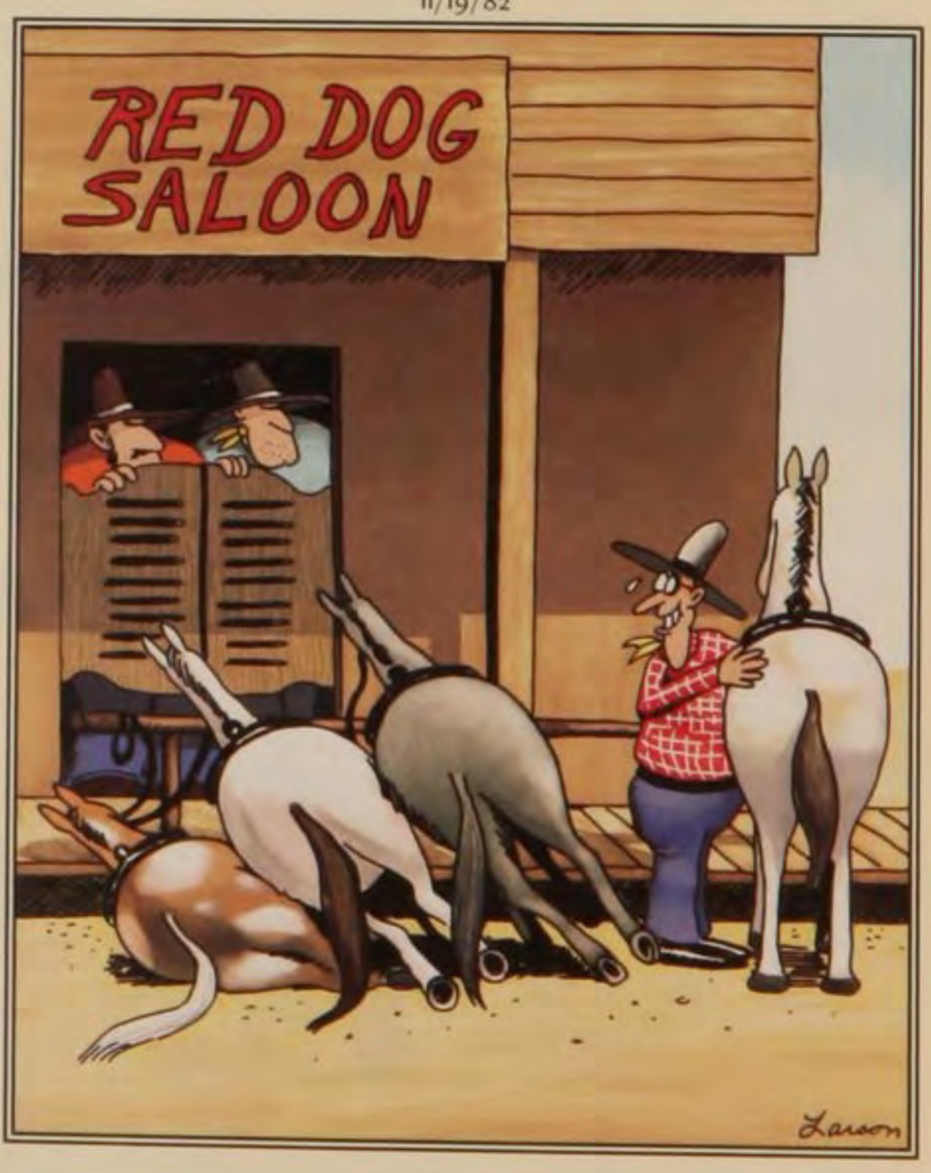
"Try to relax, ma'am. ... You say it was dark and you were alone in the house, when suddenly you felt a hand reaching from behind and ... JOHNSON! KNOCK IT OFF!"

11/18/82

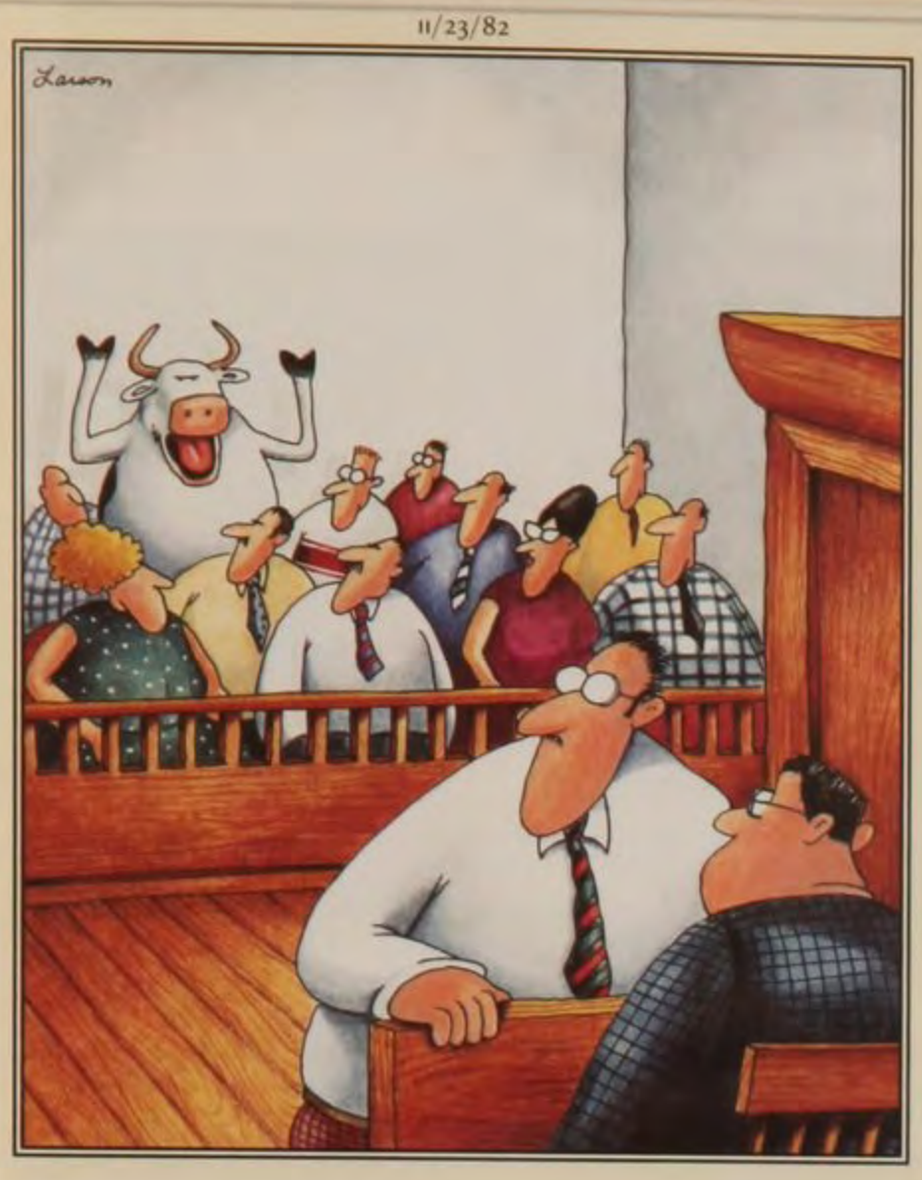


"*You,* Bernie Horowitz? ... So *you're* the 'they' in 'that's what they say'?"

11/19/82



November 1982



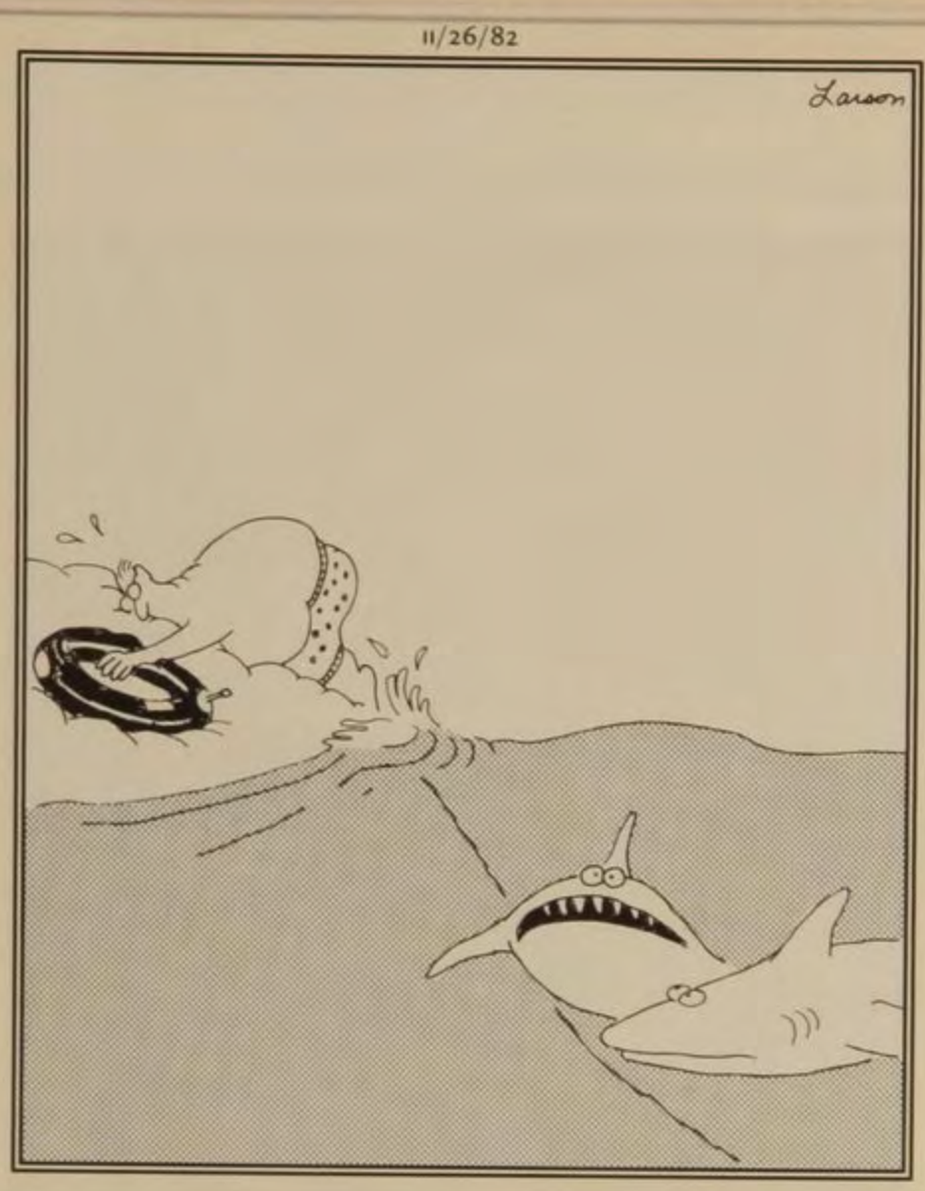
"All right! All right! I confess! I did it! Yes!
That's right! The cow! Ha ha ha!
And I feel great!"

"Oh boy! ... It's dog food *again!*"

"I wonder if you could help me. ... I'm
looking for 523 West Cherry and ...
Oh! Wow! Déjà vu!"

"We're the Wilsons, bozo! ... What's it
say on the box?"

November 1982



"He was magnificent! Just magnificent! And I almost had him!... I can't talk about it right now."

The rare and timid prairie people

"Well, you can just rebuild the fort later, Harold. ... Phyllis and Shirley are coming over and I'll need the cushions."

December 1982

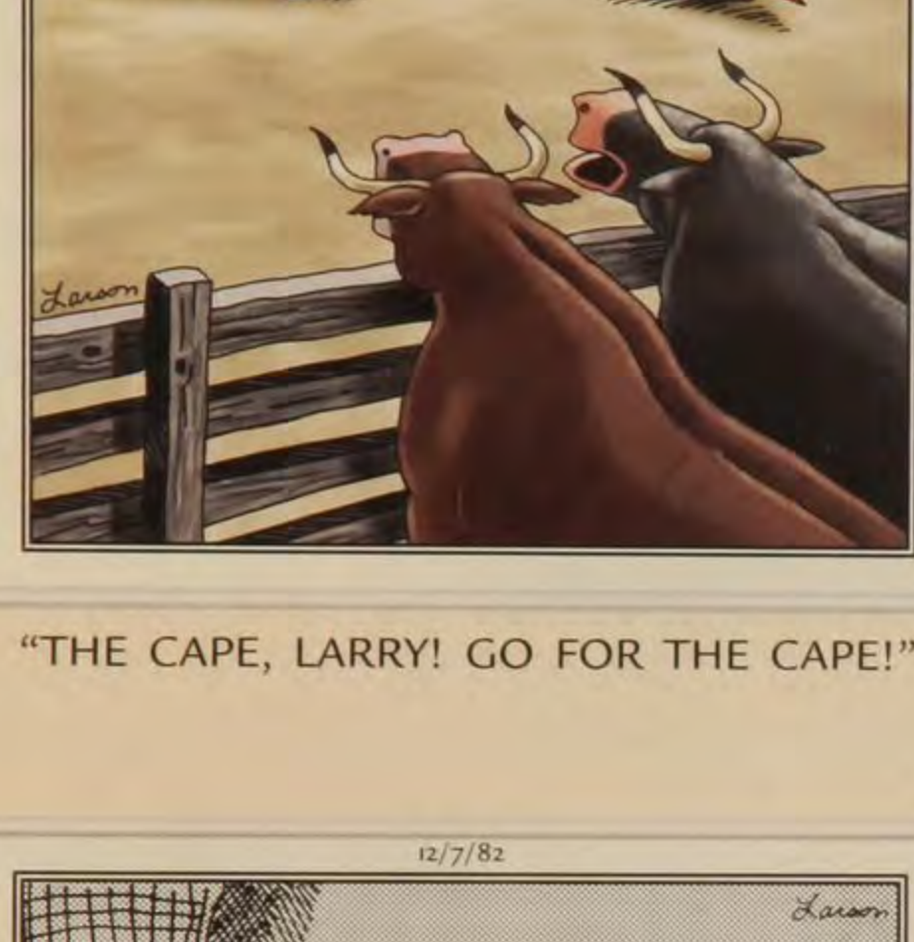
12/1/82

"THE CAPE, LARRY! GO FOR THE CAPE!"

12/2/82

"You boys got a bottle opener?"

12/7/82



"Shhh! Knock off that crunching noise! ...
Pass it on!"

12/11/82

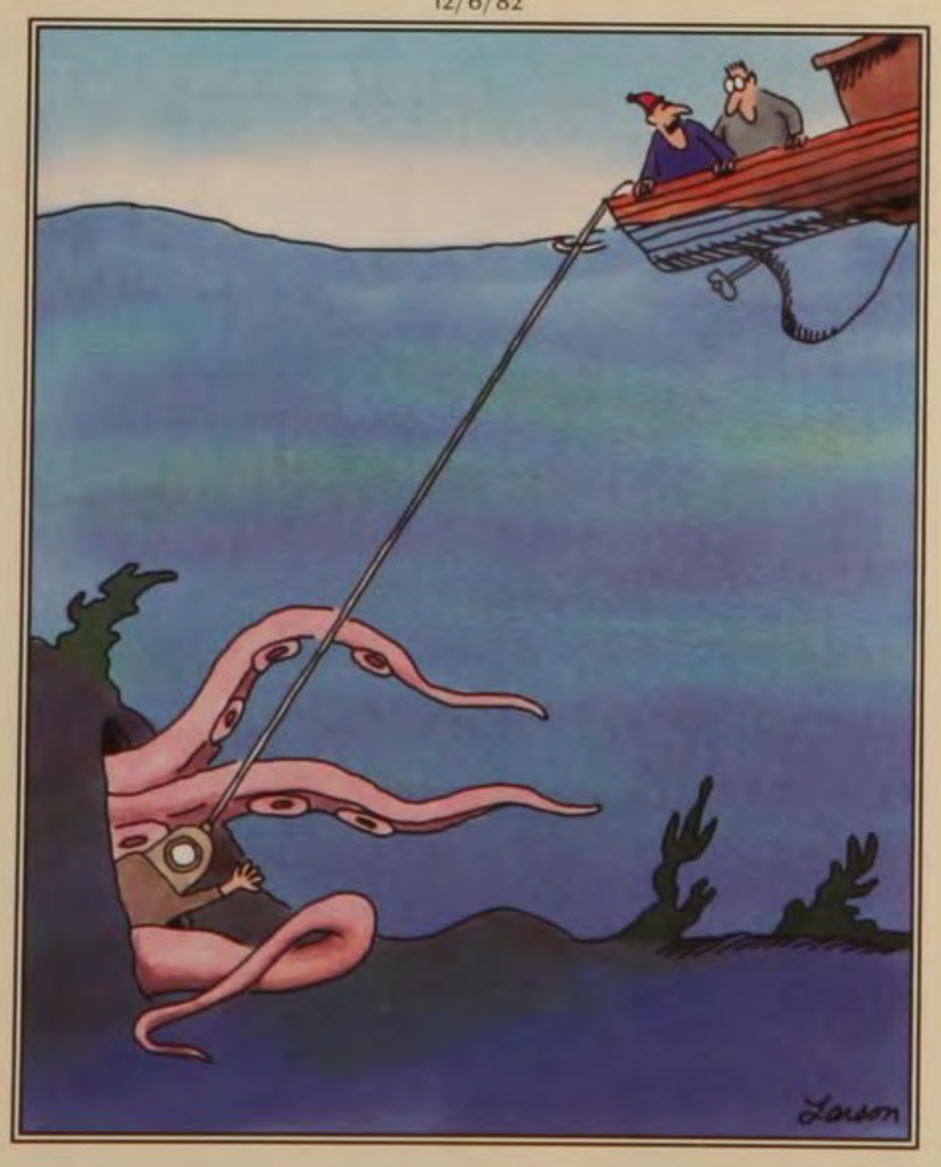
Jungle-wise characters

December 1982

12/4/82

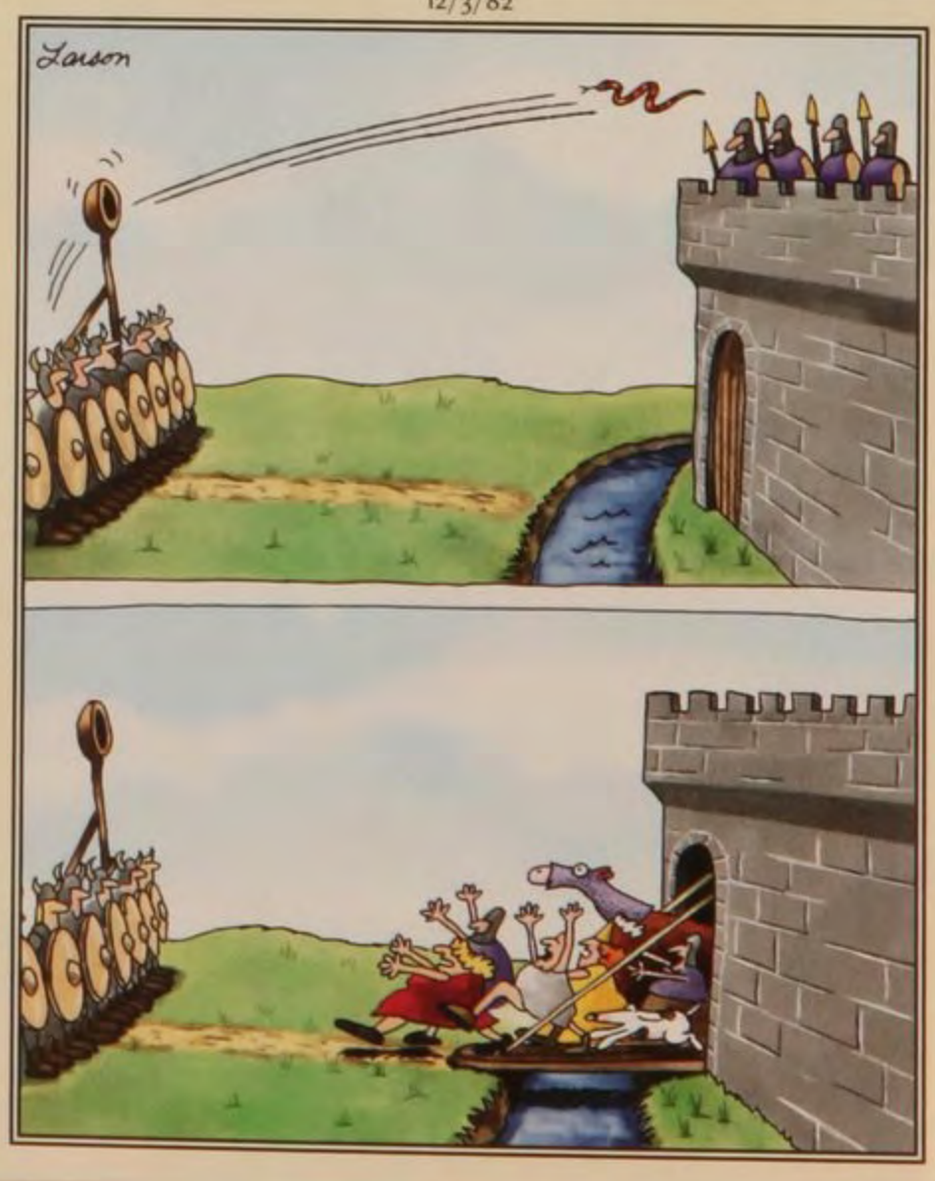
"See, Barbara? There's no one in here, no one outside. ... I'll even open the drapes and have a look."

12/6/82



"Now wait a minute. ... He said two jerks means 'more slack' and three meant 'come up'... but he never said nothin' about one long, steady pull."

12/3/82



History and the snake

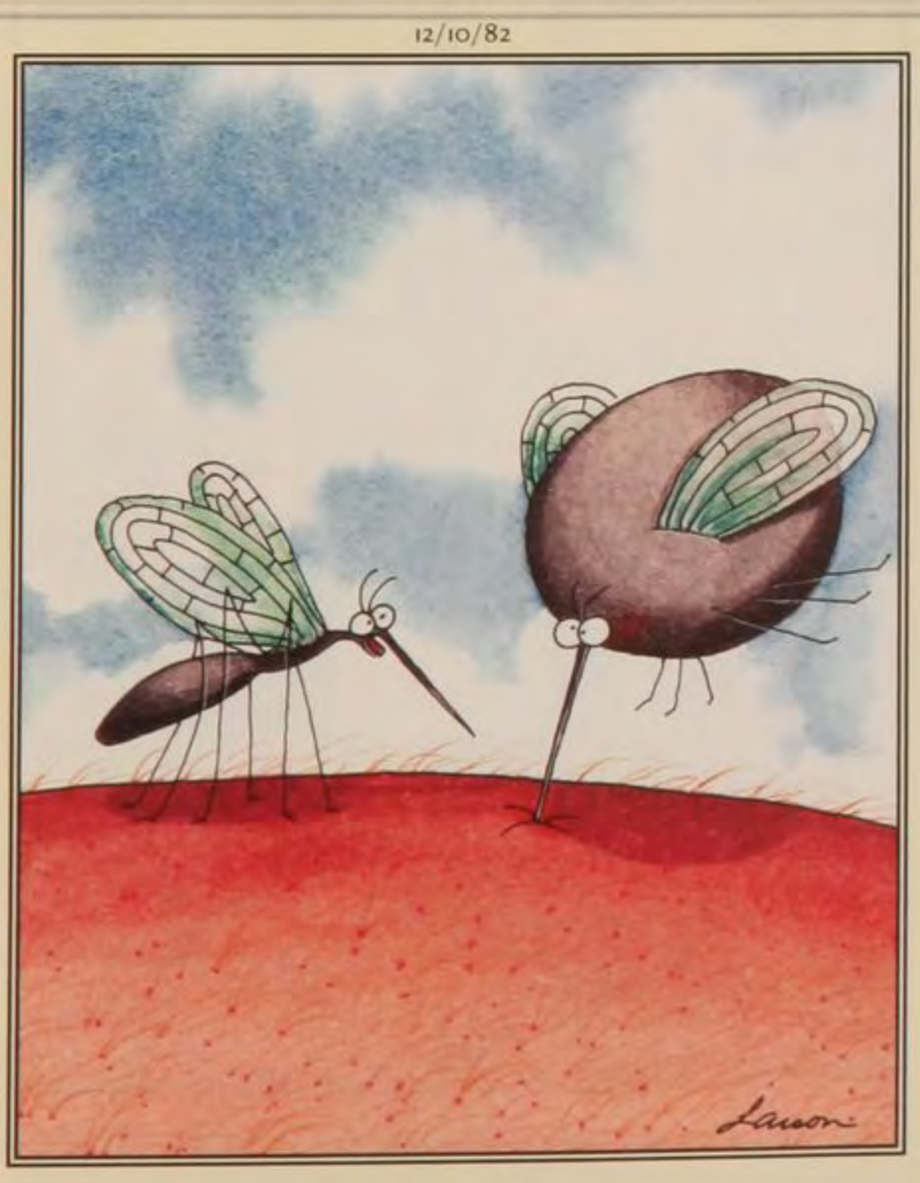
December 1982

12/9/82

12/8/82

Car key gnomes

12/10/82

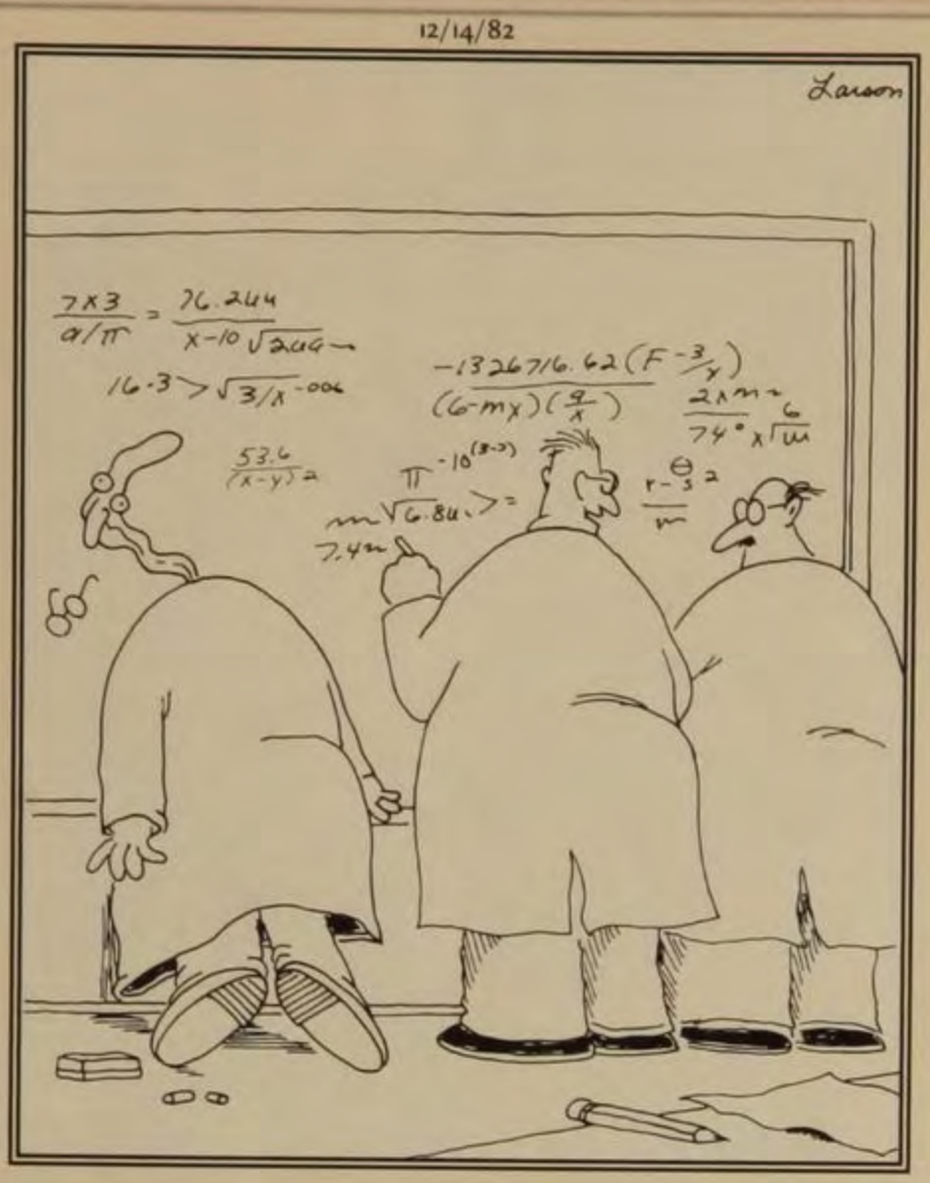


"Pull out, Betty! Pull out! ... You've hit an artery!"

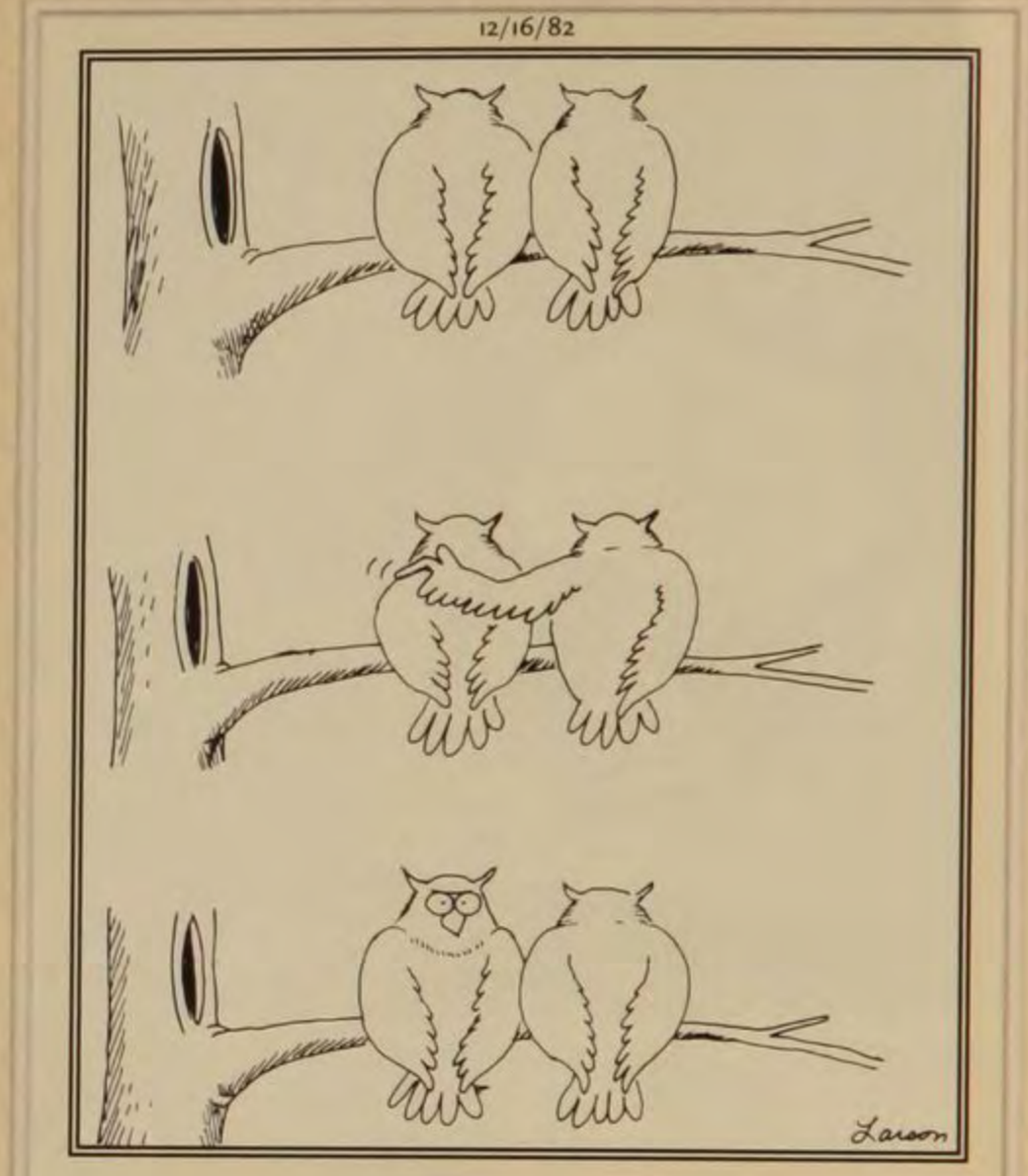
12/13/82

"Well, Zoron ... is *this* a close enough look for you?"

December 1982



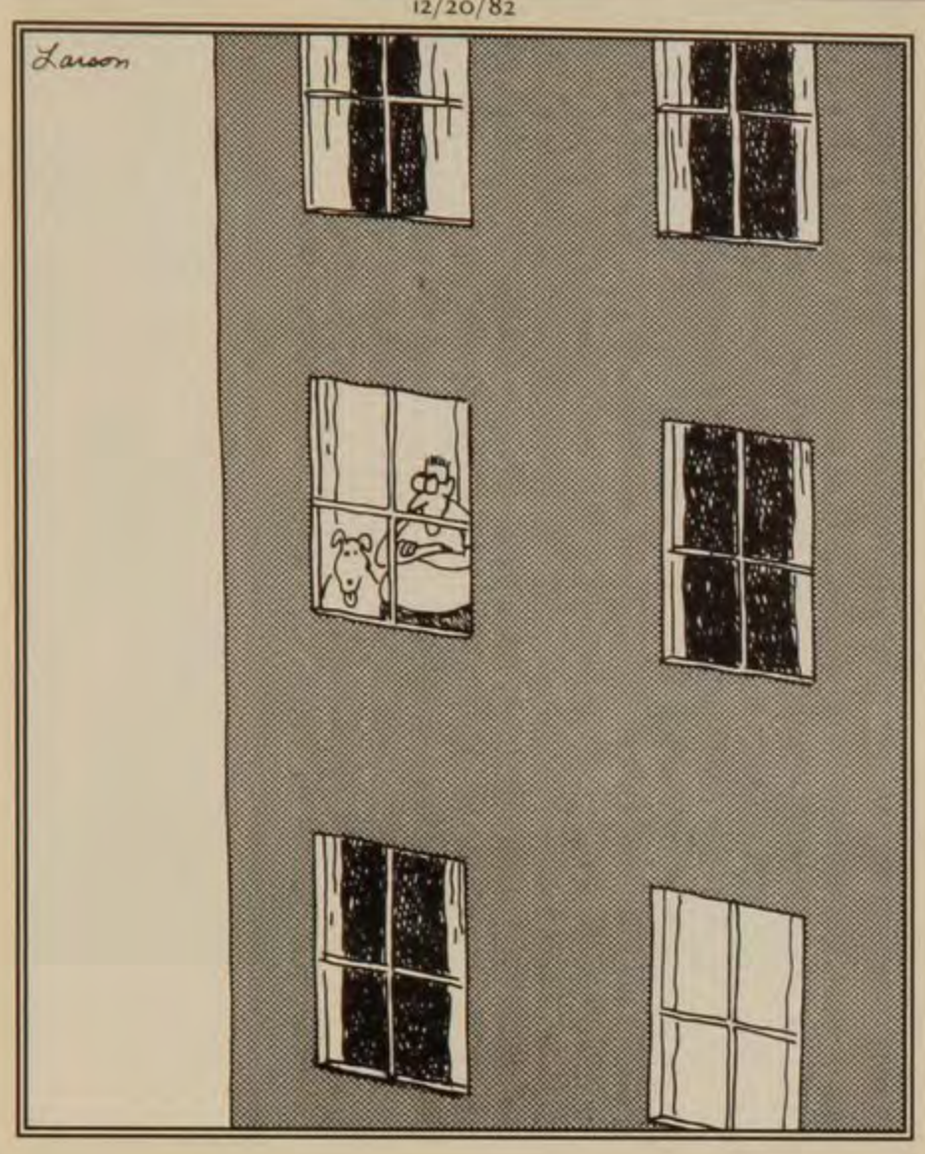
"Ha! Webster's blown his cerebral cortex."



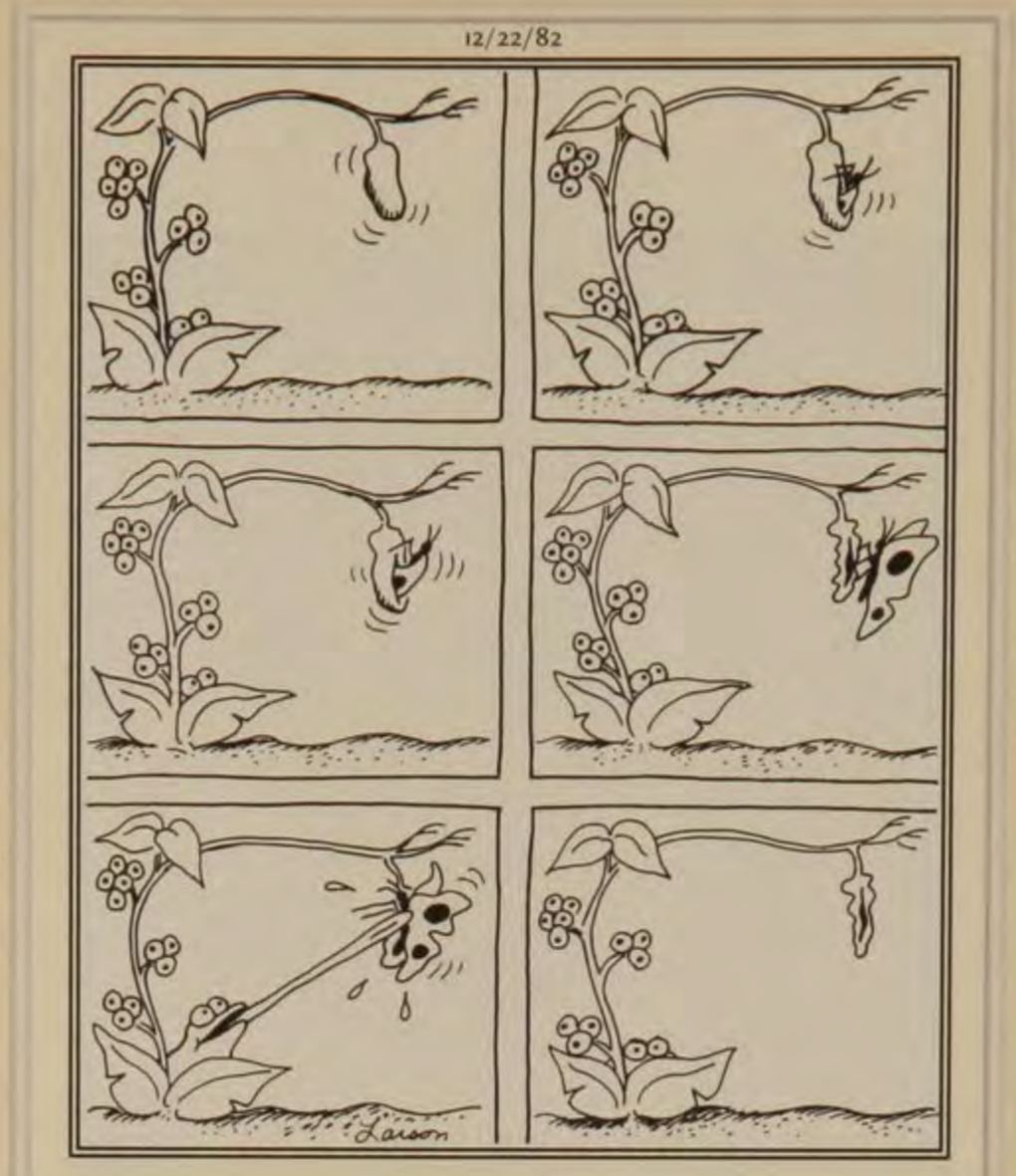
"I'm not warning you again, Sparky! ... You chew with your mouth *open!*"

"Egad! ... It's got most of Uncle Jake!"

December 1982



Edwin lived reclusively in his midtown apartment with his dog, Lola, whom he secretly loathed.

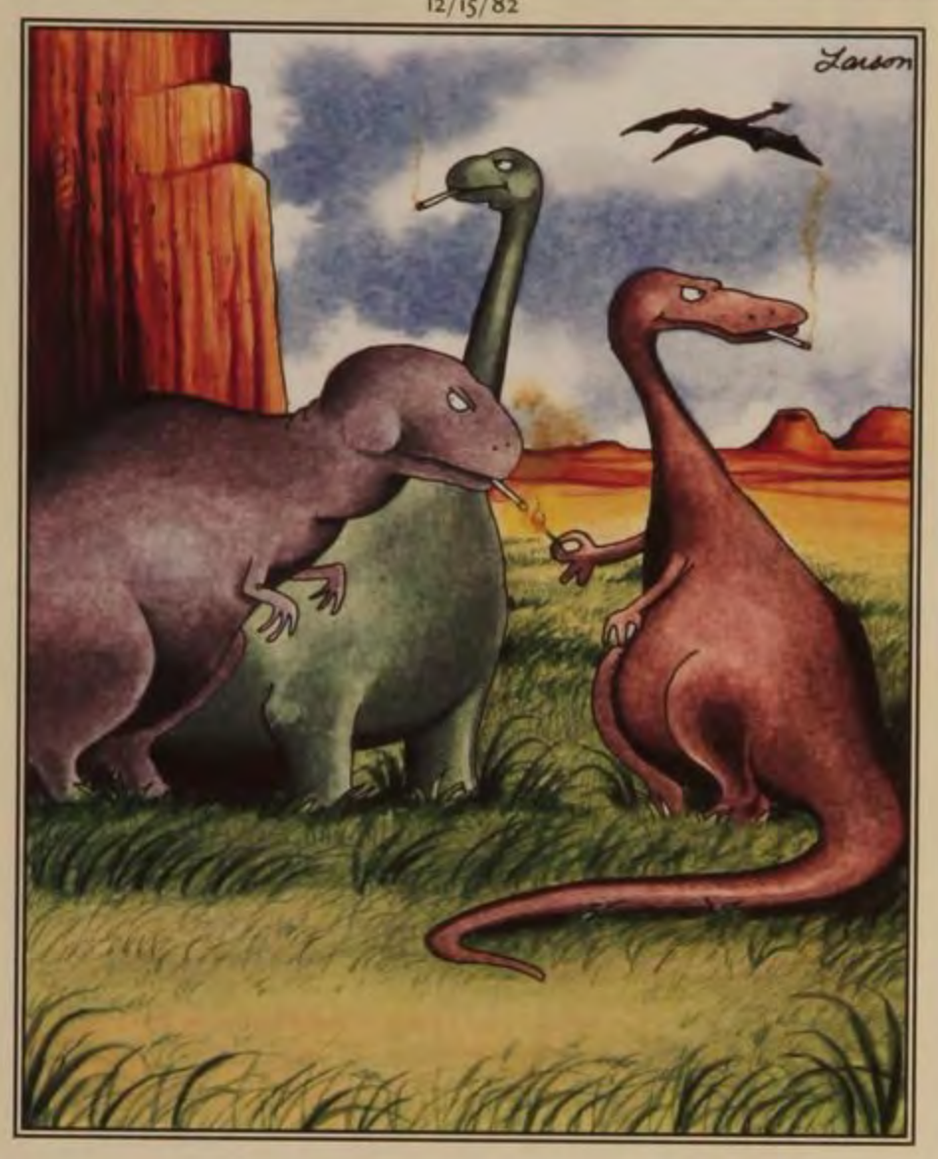


Metamorphosis

It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining, and Zog had just finished washing his new invention.

December 1982

12/15/82



The real reason dinosaurs became extinct

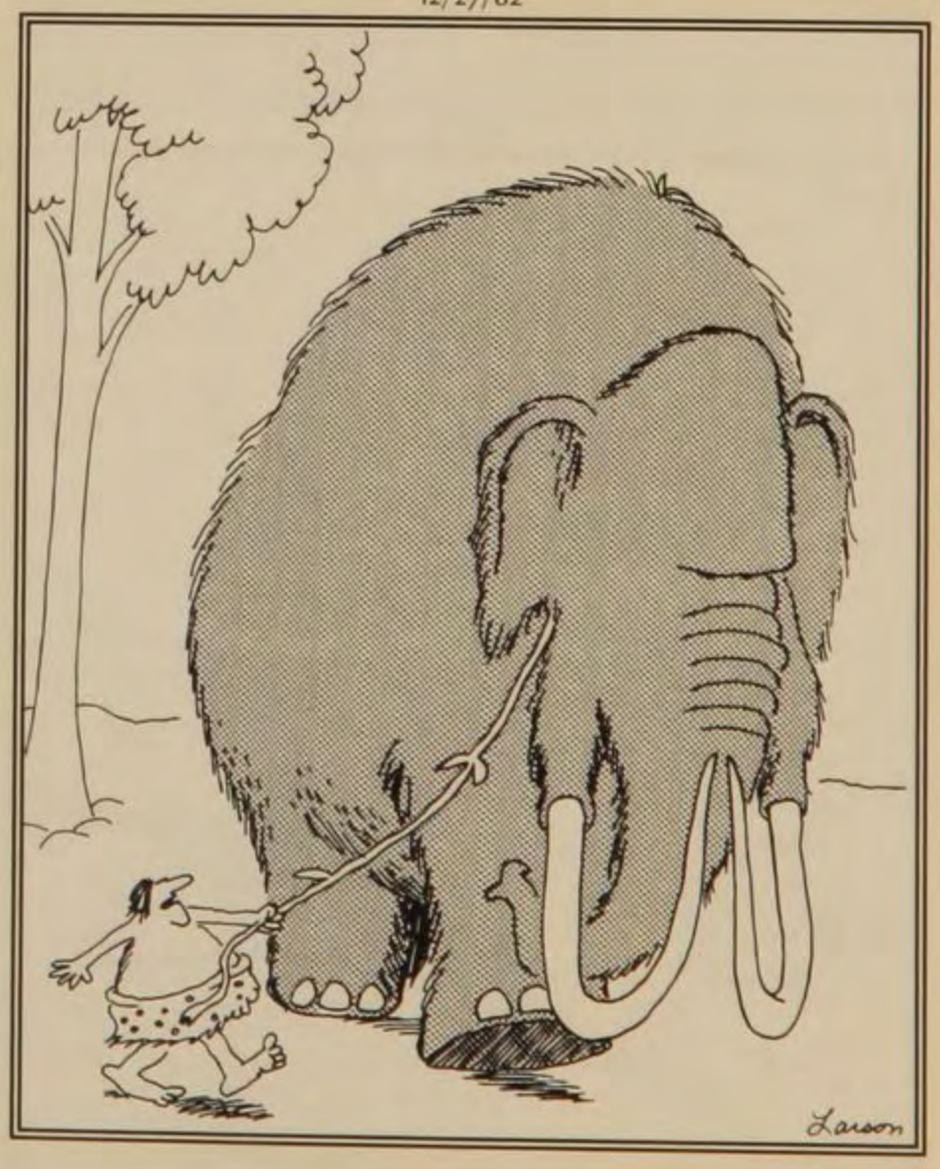
12/21/82

"All right! Rusty's in the club!"

12/25/82

"Say, Thag ... wall of ice closer today?"

12/27/82



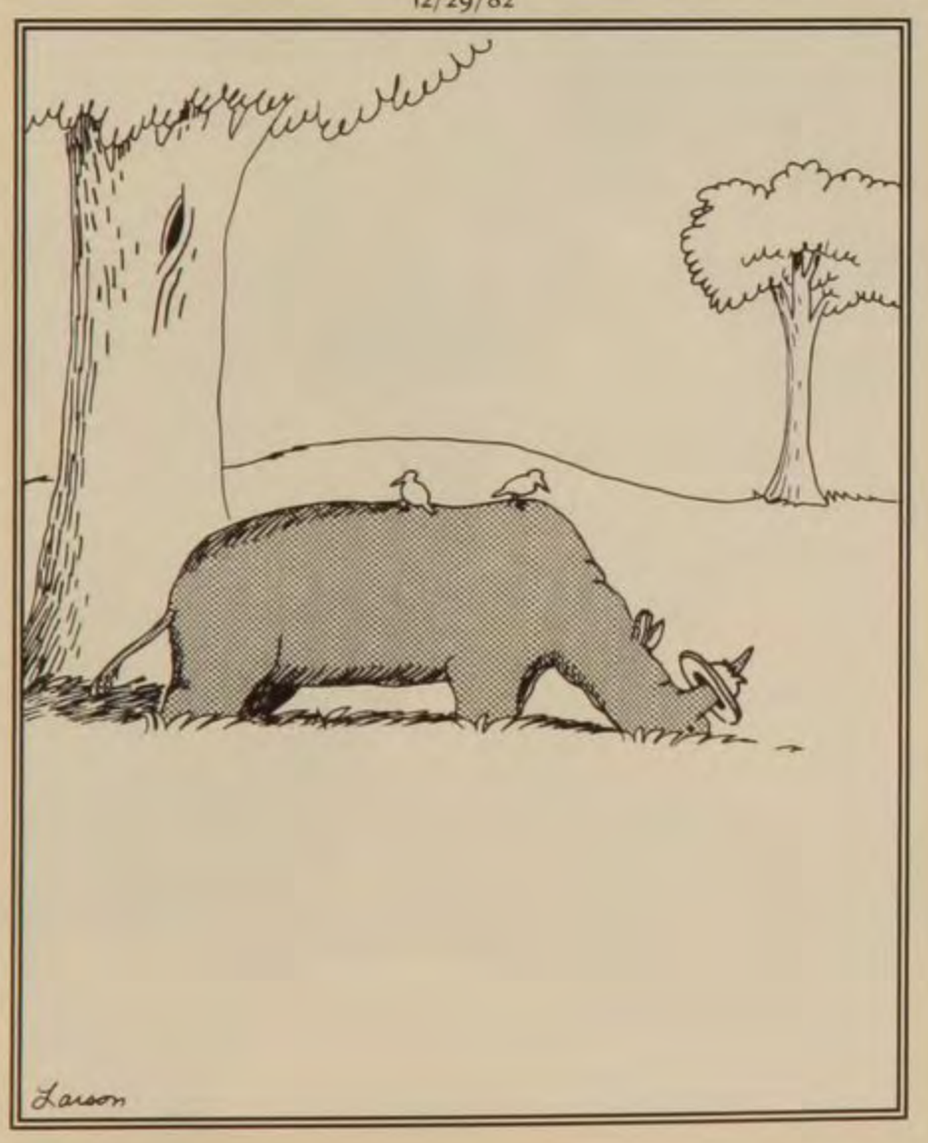
"Walkies! Walkies!"

December 1982

12/28/82

Primitive peer pressure

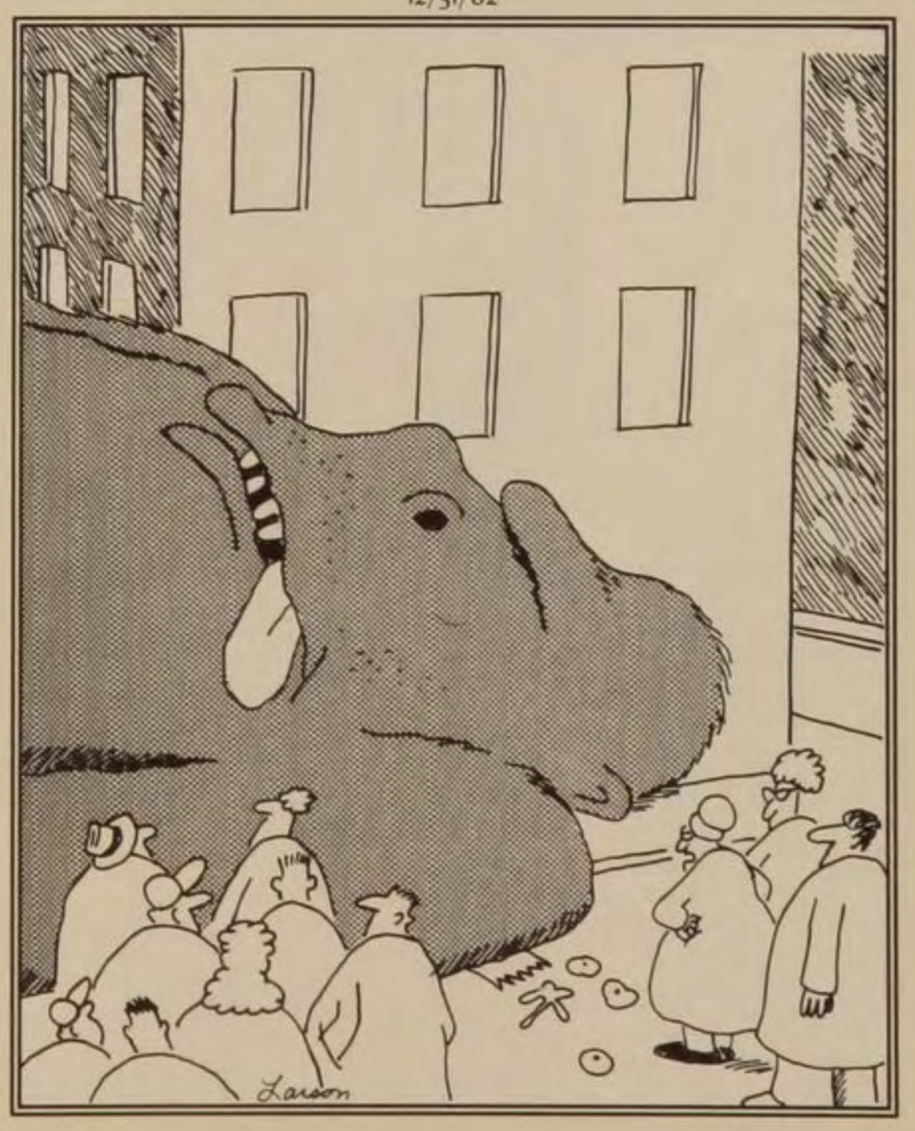
12/29/82



12/30/82

"Well, for goodness sakes! ...
What *is* this thing?"

12/31/82



"Well, that does it for my tomatoes."

8 7

Larson

On Monsters

My childhood fear of monsters is a theme I've often explored. (Hell, you're looking at 1,272 pages of therapy, folks.) Under the bed, in the closet, up in the attic, the laundry room, that storage room at the end of the hall—monsters were everywhere in our house, lying in wait. Lying in wait for *me*.

But where they all came from, where these monsters all lived, was obviously one place: The Basement. I mean, all basements provide perfect conditions for any unnatural beast: dark, cold, drafty, lots of shadowy places to lurk—a complete monster ecosystem. All they needed was a little kid chow thrown to them now and then.

Now, in our house, the door to the basement was in the kitchen, and for some ungodly reason the light switch for the basement was controlled on the kitchen side. For a monster-fearing kid, especially one with an older brother who had obviously entered into some kind of evil pact with these same monsters in order to save his own skin, this was not a good thing.

One evening that I would like to forget, I was about halfway up the stairs, returning with some firewood. (Wouldn't it be nice if you could hear the sound track to your own life? At least you'd have a clue that danger was imminent.) And that's when it happened. With an audible click, the light switch went off and I was plunged into darkness. Welcome to nightfall in the Monster Serengeti.

I dropped the wood (the cacophony of which wrung out the last few drops that still remained in my adrenal gland) and scrambled blindly to the top of the stairs. There, my desperate hand finally found the doorknob. Locked, of course. (Did I mention the lock, also controlled from the kitchen side? Such a fun house to grow up in.) And then, in an eerie, lilting tone, my brother's voice could be heard from the other side: "It's coming for you, Gary! Do you hear it? It's cooominnnnng for youuuu!"

Just like the mother wildebeest, my own mother could always recognize the sound of one of her calves in distress. Soon she arrived, hooves flying, driving off the hyena (the laughing variety, as usual) and saving me from certain death at the hands of God-knows-what that was slowly ascending the stairs behind me.

Over the years, I can't help but think about how often people have asked me, "How do you come up with ideas?"

God, it is so easy.

For the time being, the monster wasn't in Ricky's closet. For the time being.

"See, Agnes? ... It's just Kevin."

"Now now, Billy. ... How could you have seen a monster if you can't even describe him?"

"I've got it again, Larry ... an eerie feeling like there's something on top of the bed."

"Uh-oh, Donny. Sounds like the monster in the basement has heard you crying again. ... Let's be reeeeal quiet and hope he goes away."

Things that go bump in the night

The nightly crisis of Todd's stomach vs. Todd's imagination

"Shove off, buddy ... I've been working this neighborhood for years."

The monster snorkel: allows your child to breathe comfortably without exposing vulnerable parts to an attack.

January 1983

1/1/83

"RAPUNZEL, RAPUNZEL! ... LET DOWN YOUR HAIR!"

1/5/83

No man is an island.

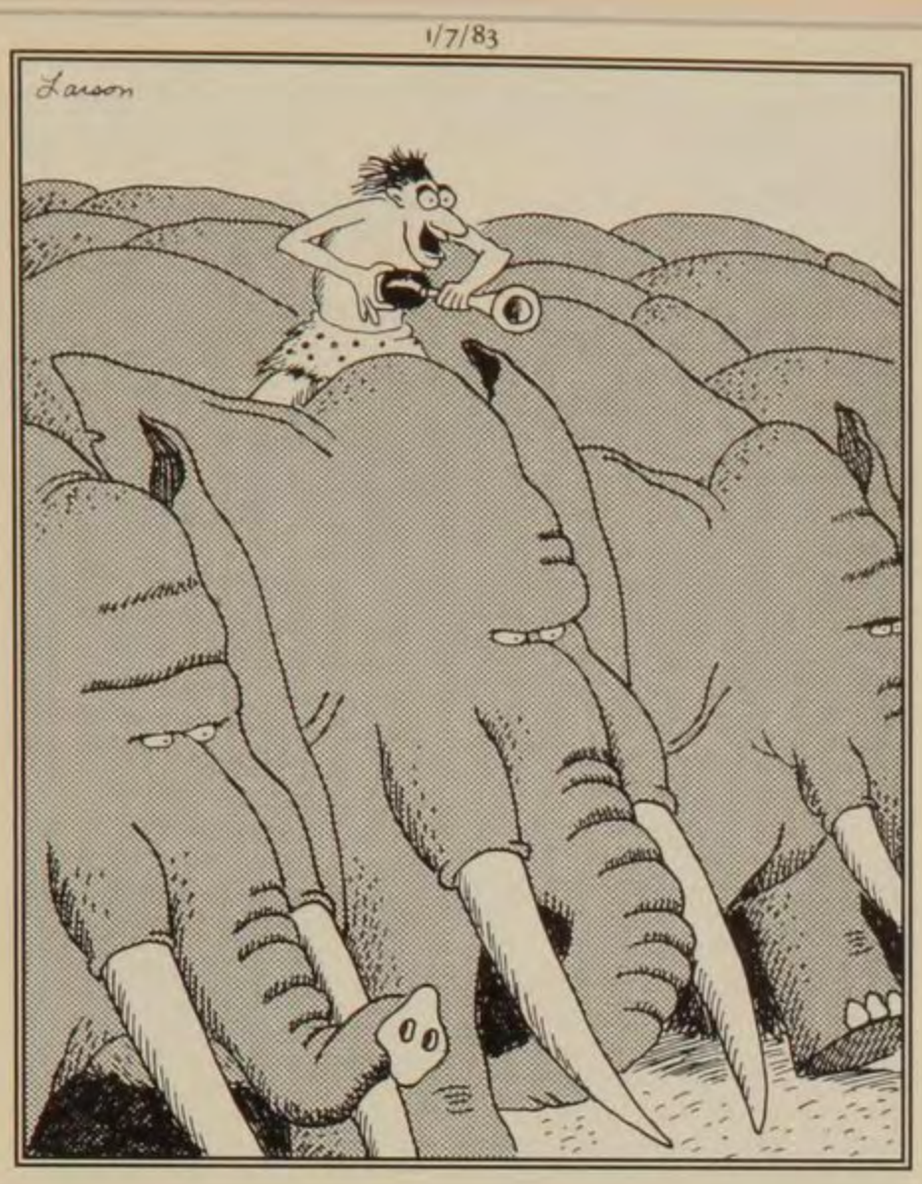
1/3/83

"That was incredible. No fur, claws, horns, antlers, or nothin' ... just soft and pink."

1/4/83

"Well, well ... looks like it's time for the old luggage test."

January 1983



"Well, don't bring the filthy things in here, you imbecile! ... Take 'em down to the lake!"

"And see this ring right here, Jimmy? ... That's another time when the old fellow miraculously survived some big forest fire."

January 1983

1/10/83

1/12/83

1/13/83

1/11/83

"Well, look who's here. ... God's gift to warthogs."

January 1983

1/15/83

With a reverberating crash, Lulu's adventure on the tractor had come to an abrupt end.

1/18/83

"I ... could ... have ... sworn ... you ... said ... eleven ... steps."

1/21/83

1/17/83

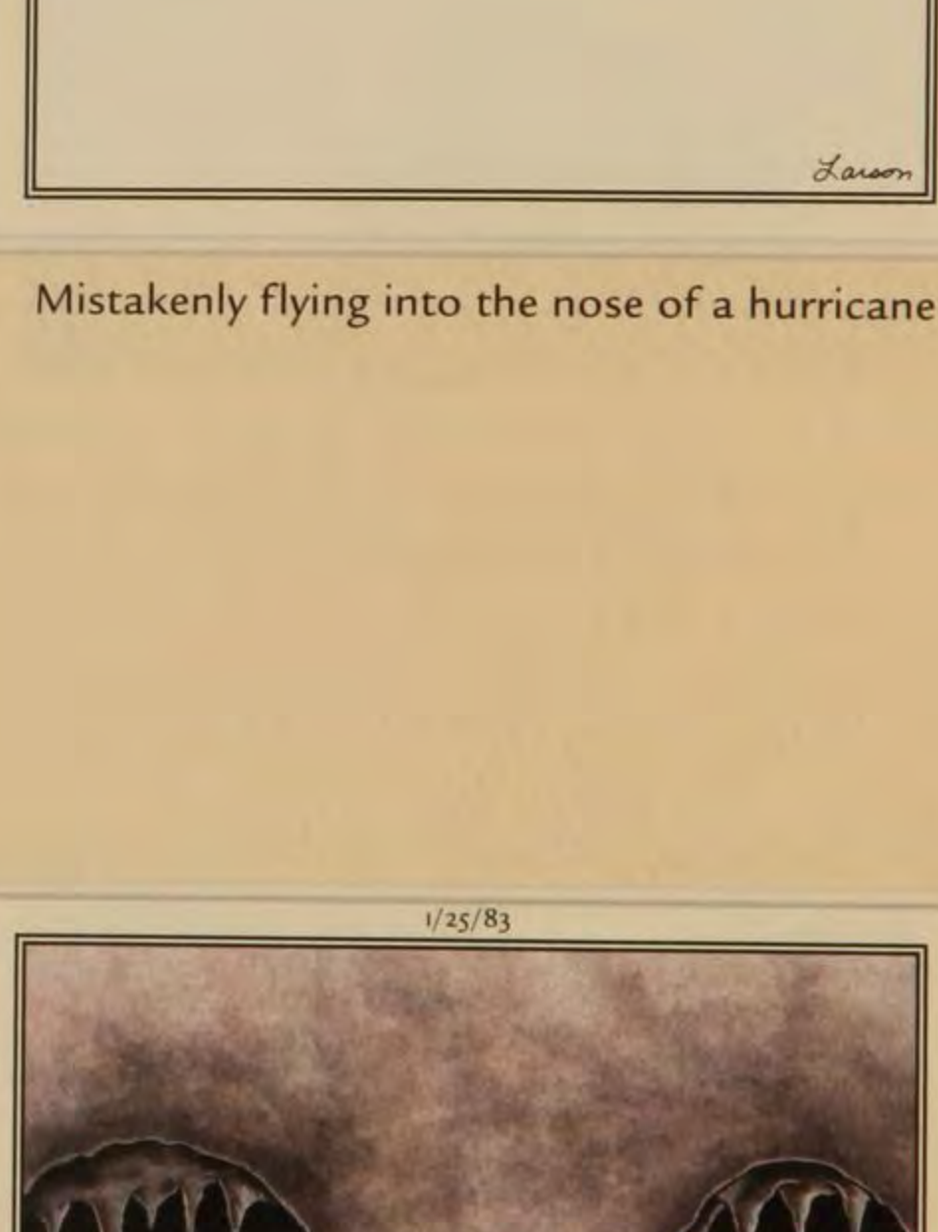
"For heaven's sake! Harold! Wake up! We've got bed buffaloes!"

January 1983

"Fool! This is an eleven-sixteenths. ... I asked for a five-eighths!"

Mistakenly flying into the nose of a hurricane

"Yes ... I believe there's a question there in the back."



"There you go again! ... Every time the bears fight, you're right there!"

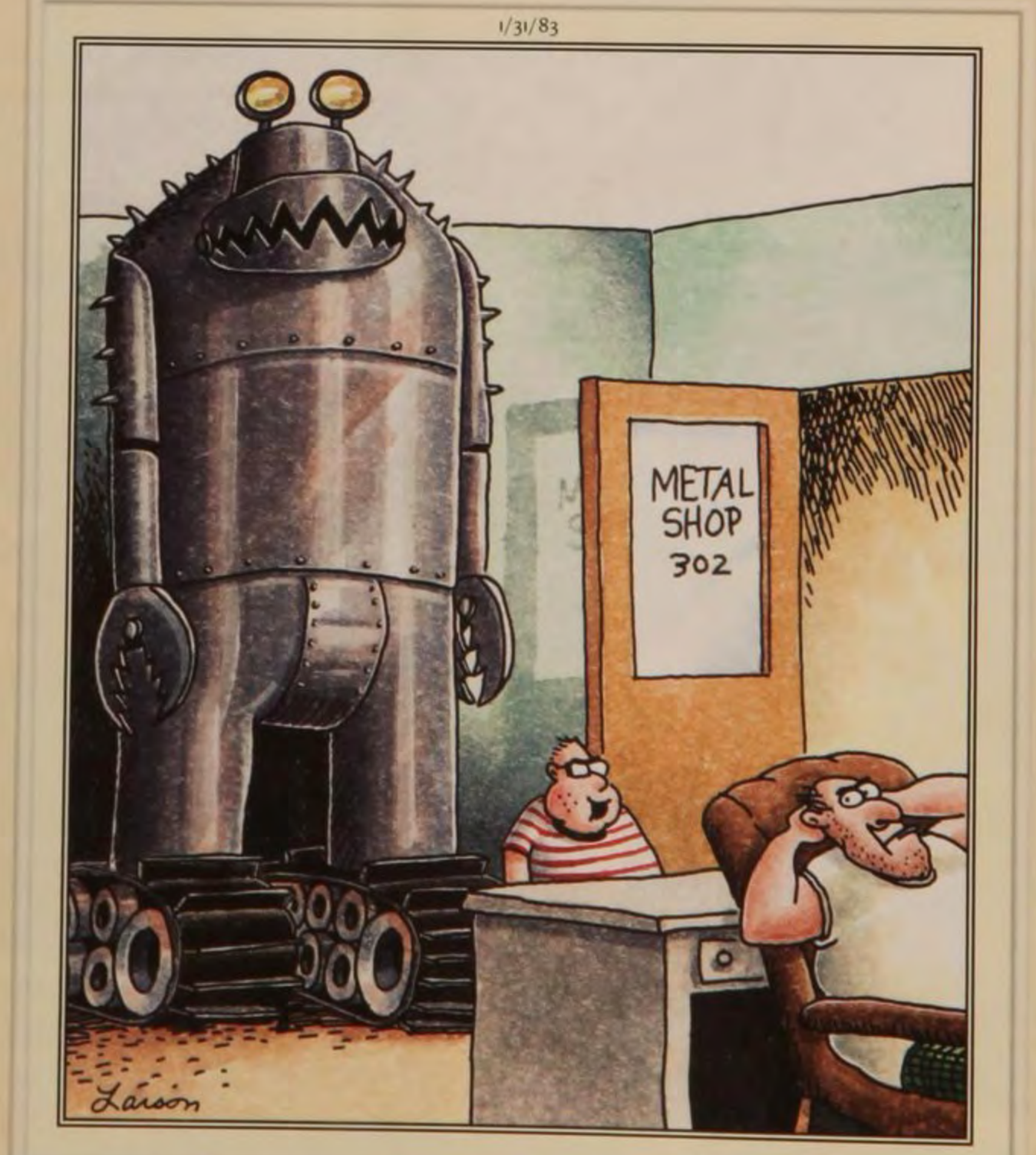
January 1983

Evolution of the Stickman

"Okay, here we go! Remember, wiggle those noses, stuff those cheeks, and act cute—and no smoking, Carl."

January 1983

"Say ... now *there's* a little hat!"



"My project's ready for grading, Mr. Big Nose. ...
Hey! I'm talkin' to YOU, squidbrain!"

February 1983

2/2/83

"Say ... what's a mountain goat doing way up here in a cloud bank?"

2/4/83

Harold would have been on his guard, but he thought the old gypsy woman was speaking figuratively.

2/9/83

February 1983

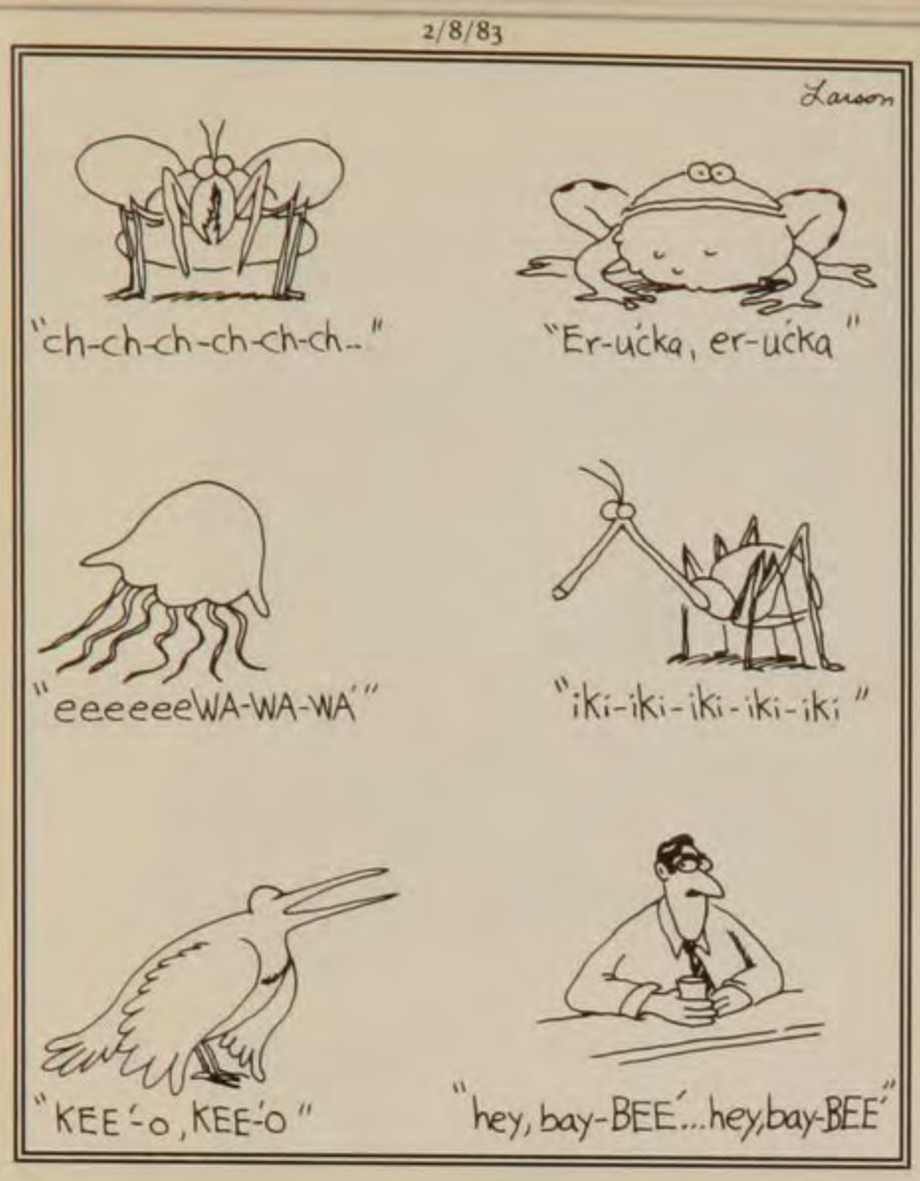
"You know? ... I think I'd like a salad."

"Neanderthals, Neanderthals! Can't make fire! Can't make spear! Nyah, nyah, nyah!"

Lewis and Clark meet Sylvia and Rhonda.

"Freeze, Earl! Freeze! ... Something rattled!"

February 1983



Animals and their mating songs

"I don't like this, Wadsworth. ... Bob never should've been allowed out on the dance floor."

Brian has a rendezvous with destiny.

"Well, here comes Stanley now. ... Good heavens! What's he caught *this* time?"

February 1983

2/10/83

Carl shoves Roger, Roger shoves Carl, and tempers rise.

2/11/83

"Hey! Look at me, everybody! I'm a cowboy! ... Howdy, howdy, howdy!"

2/14/83

"Three wishes? Did I say three wishes? ... Shoot! I'll grant you *four* wishes."

2/15/83

"Again? Oh, all right. ... One warm, summer evening many years ago, I was basking on a stretch of Interstate 95 not far from here ..."

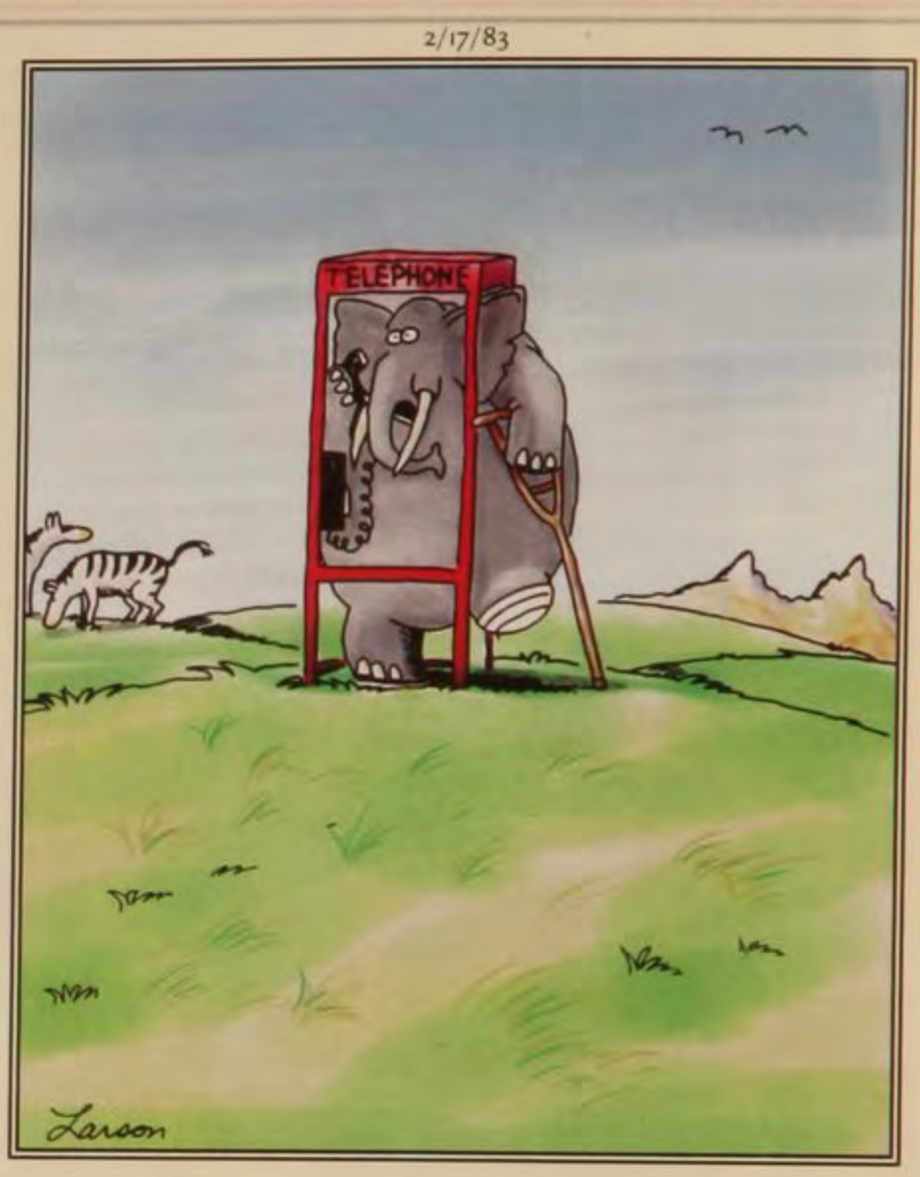
February 1983

February 1983

2/16/83

Sixty-five million years ago, when cows ruled the Earth

2/17/83



"What? ... They turned it into a WASTEBASKET?"

2/19/83

"Well, just look at you, Jimmy! ... Soaking wet, hair mussed up, shoes untied ... and take that horrible thing out of your mouth!"

2/22/83

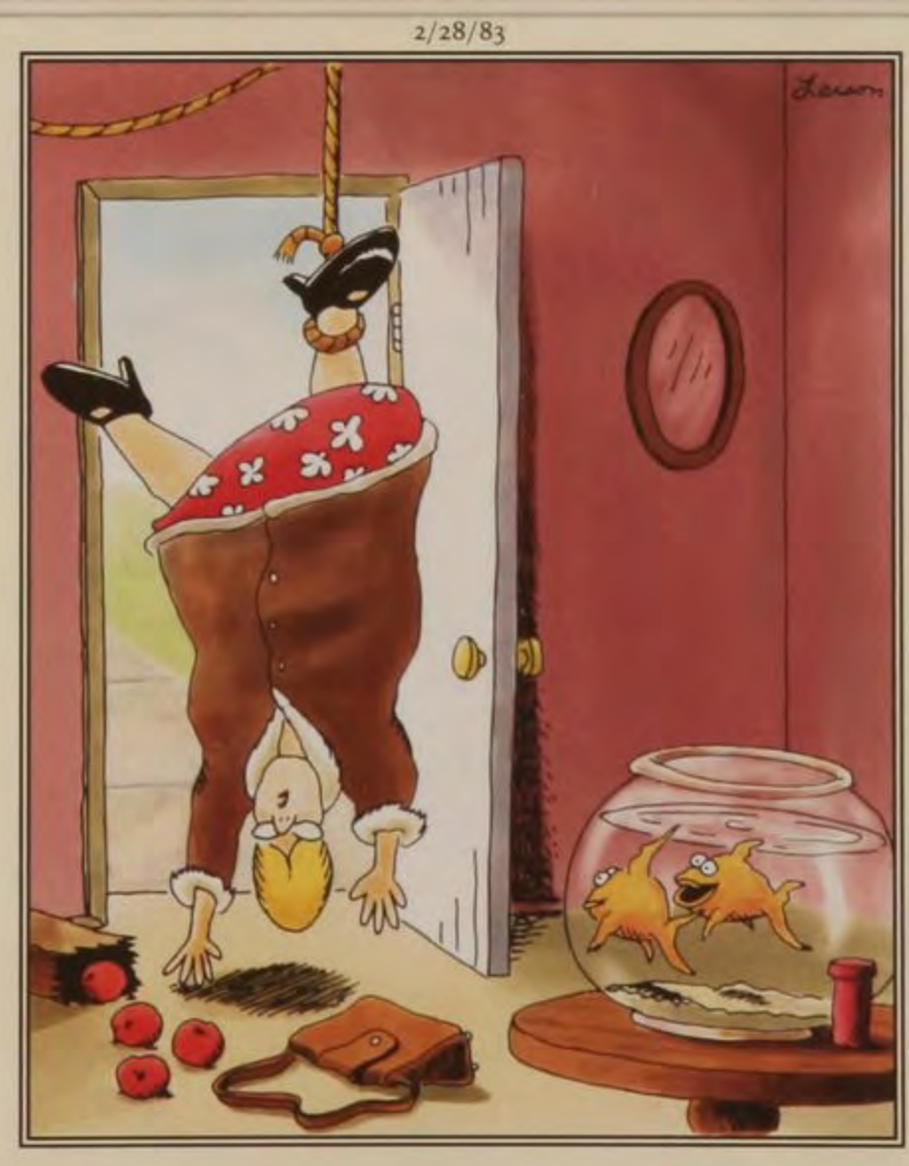
"What did I say, Boris? ... These new uniforms are a crock!"

February 1983

"And I like honesty in a relationship—I'm not into playing games."

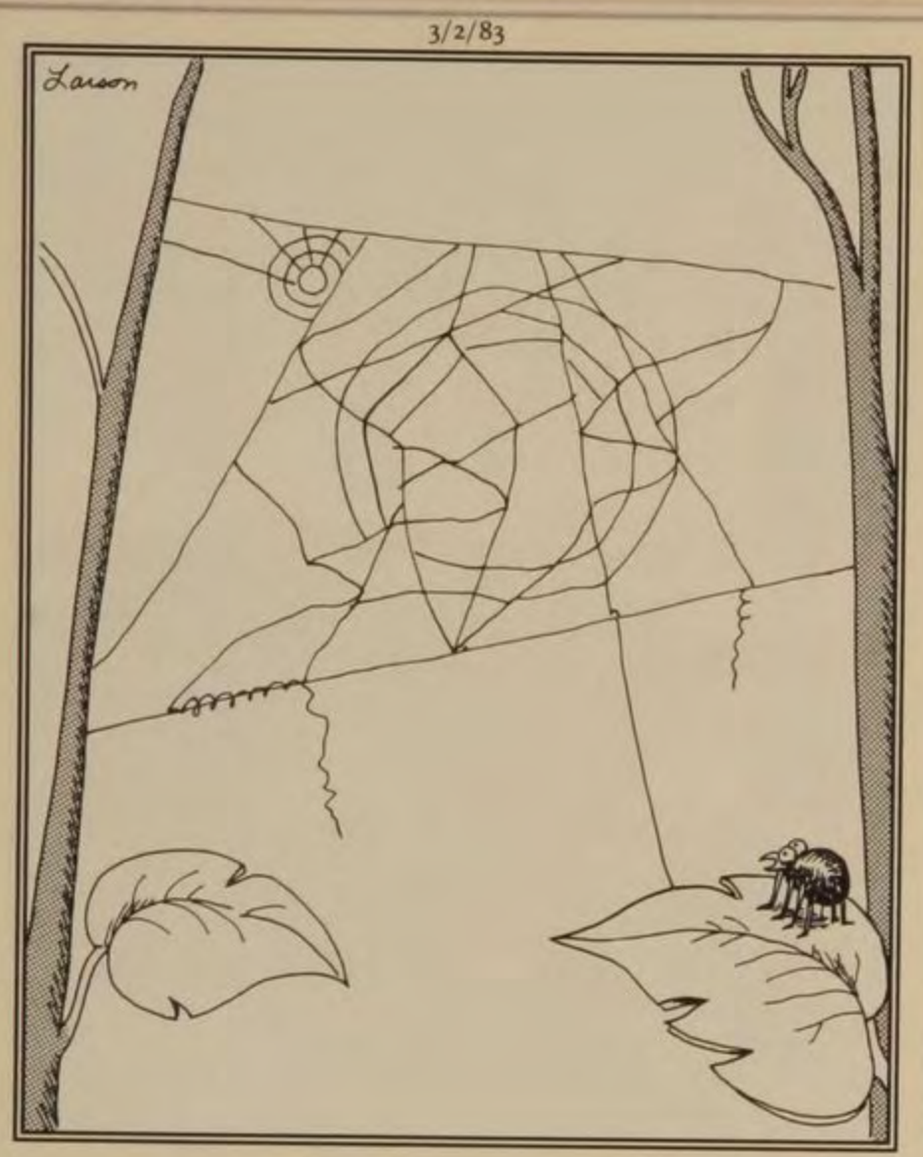
Andrew is hesitant, remembering his fiasco with the car of straw.

"I'm leaving you, Charles ... and I'm taking the grubs with me."



"It worked! It worked!"

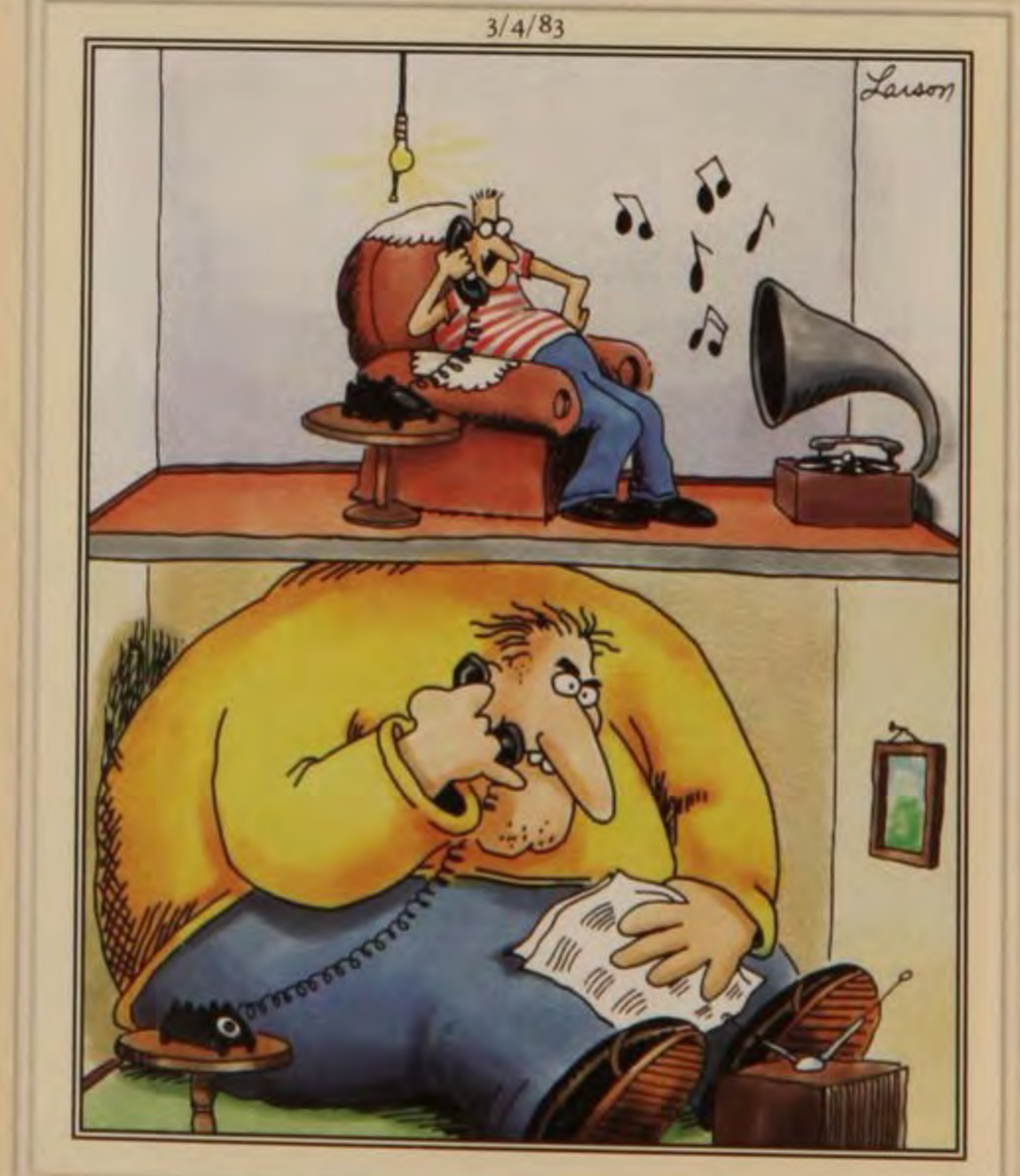
March 1983



"Whoa! ... That *can't* be right!"

"Gesundheit."

"Not too close, Higgins. ... This one's got a knife."



"Well, why don't you come up here and *make* me turn it down ... or do you just *talk* big, fella?"

March 1983

3/7/83

"My word! I'd hate to be caught outside on a day like this!"

3/8/83

3/5/83

Night of the Robin

3/10/83

"Lunch is ready, Lawrence, and ... what? You're *still* a fly?"

March 1983

3/9/83

3/11/83

Primitive man discovers tools.

3/14/83

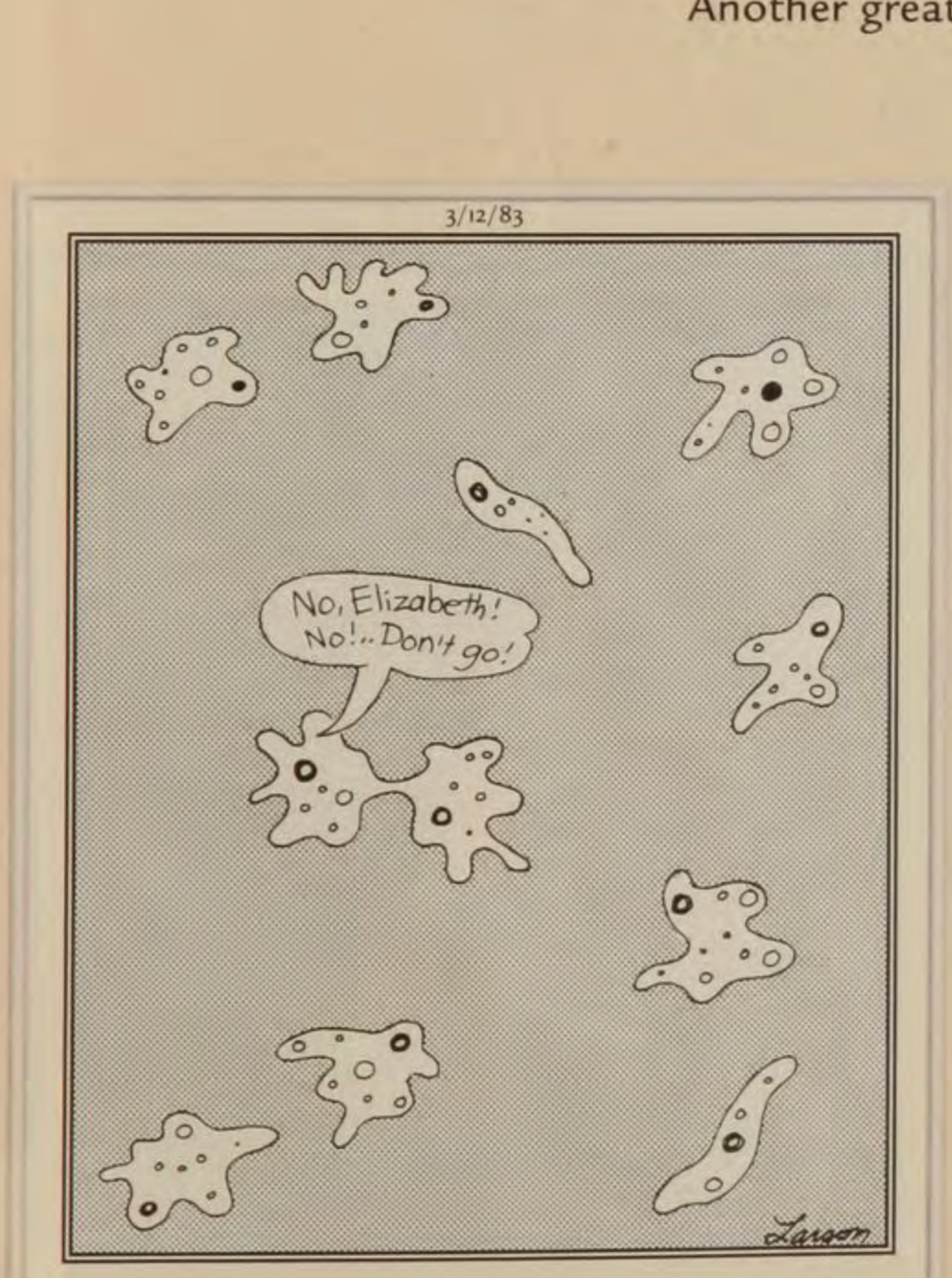
"Okay! Now don't move, Andy! ... Here comes Mom!"

3/18/83

"Blast! Up to now, the rhino was one of my prime suspects."

March 1983

Another great moment in evolution

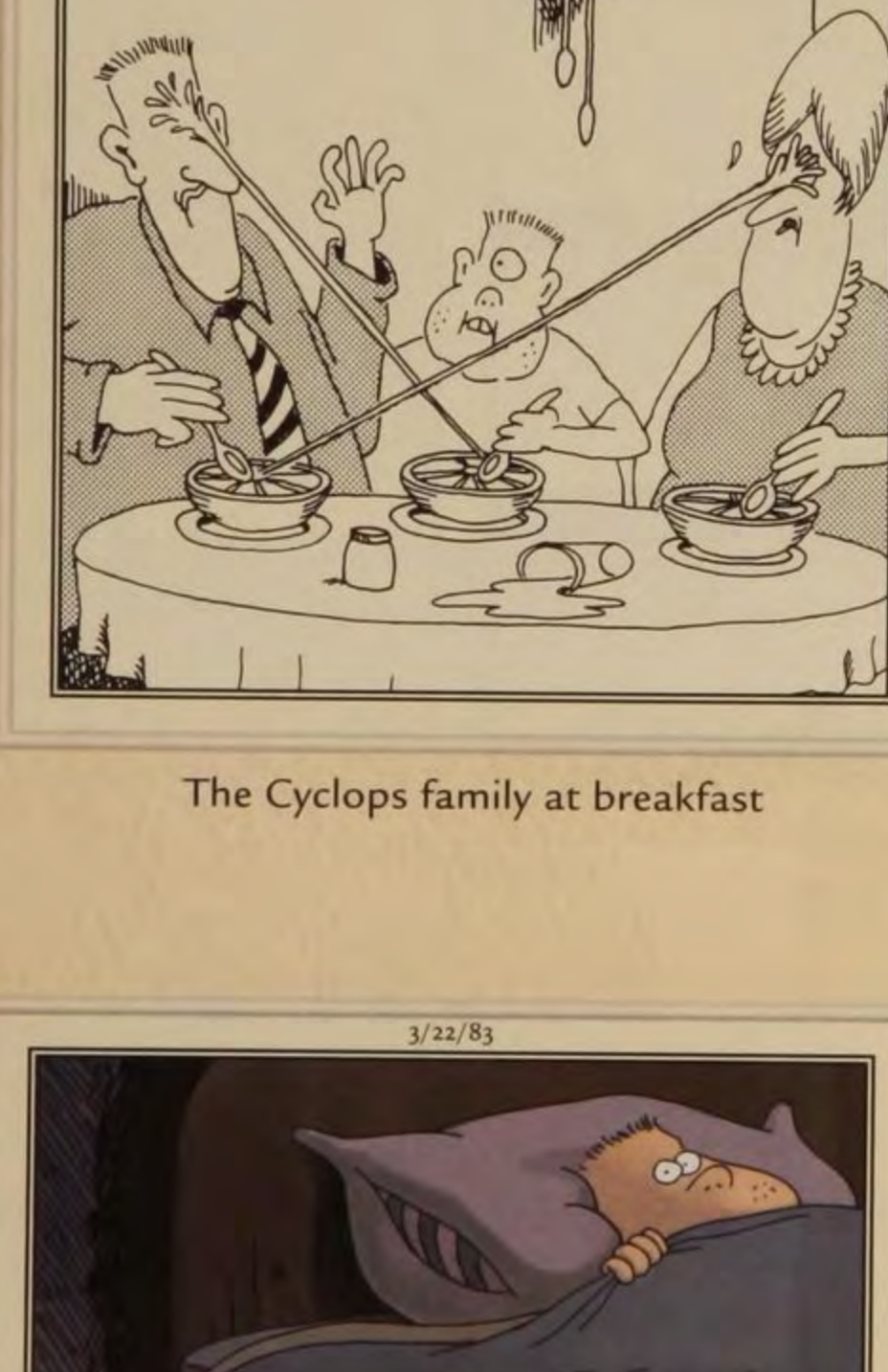


Life in the petri dish

March 1983

The Cyclops family at breakfast

"How cute, Earl. ... The kids have built a little fort in the backyard."



"I've got it again, Larry ... an eerie feeling like there's something on top of the bed."

Cow philosophy

March 1983

"It's true, Barbara. ... You're the first woman I've ever brought here."

"Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

March 1983

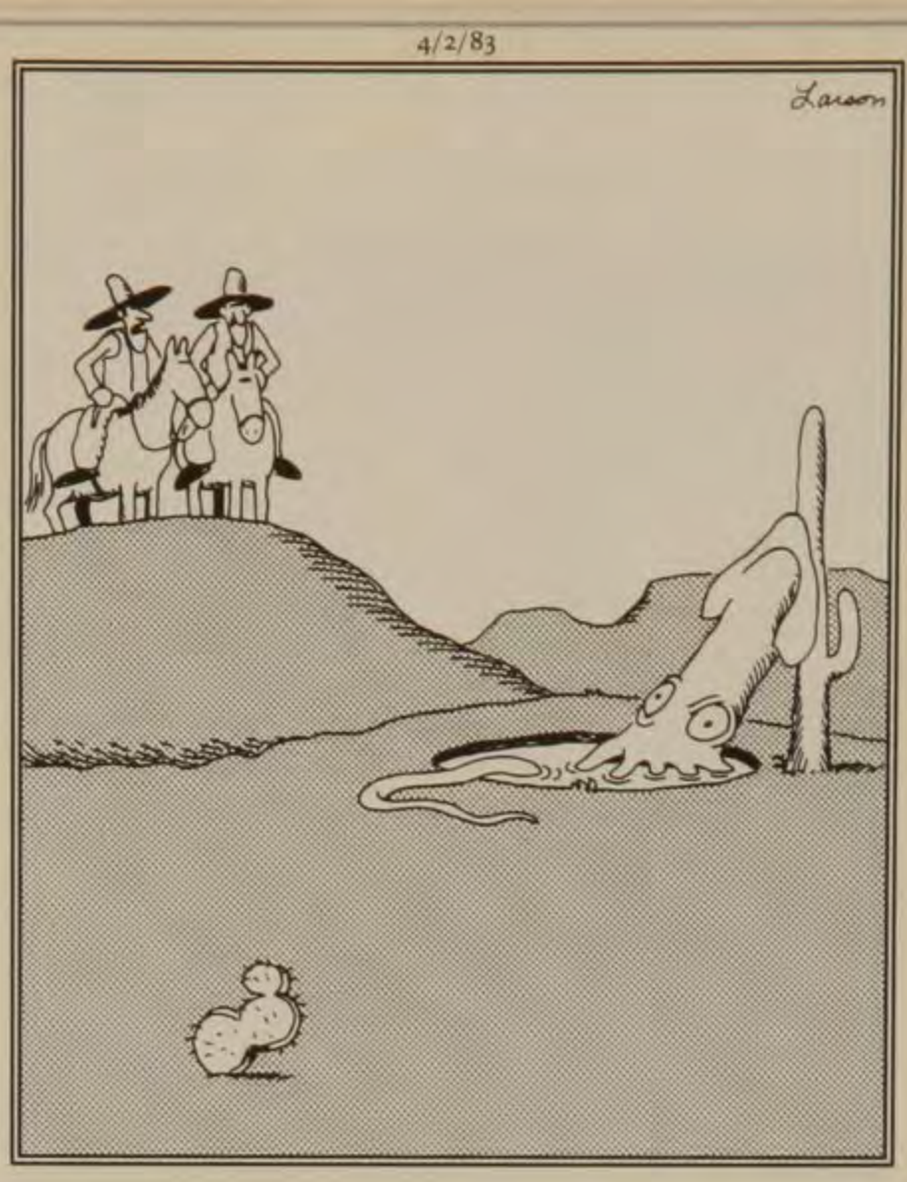
"Just pull it off and apologize, Cromwell ... or we'll go out in the hall and establish this pecking order once and for all!"

"*You* again!"

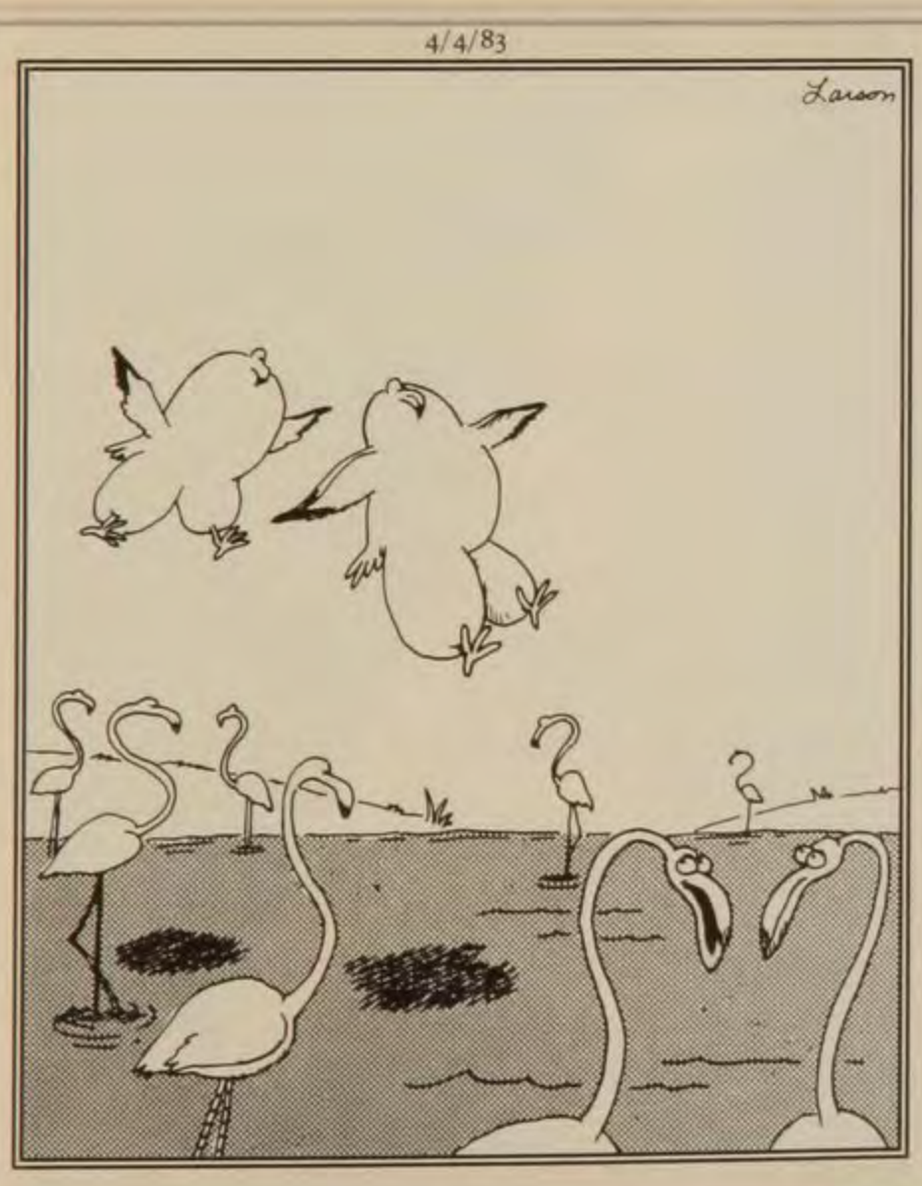
"Trim the bowl, you idiots! Trim the bowl!"

April 1983

"Now listen up! You both know the rules, you've got equal portions, and we're going to settle this thing once and for all. ... On your mark ... get set ..."



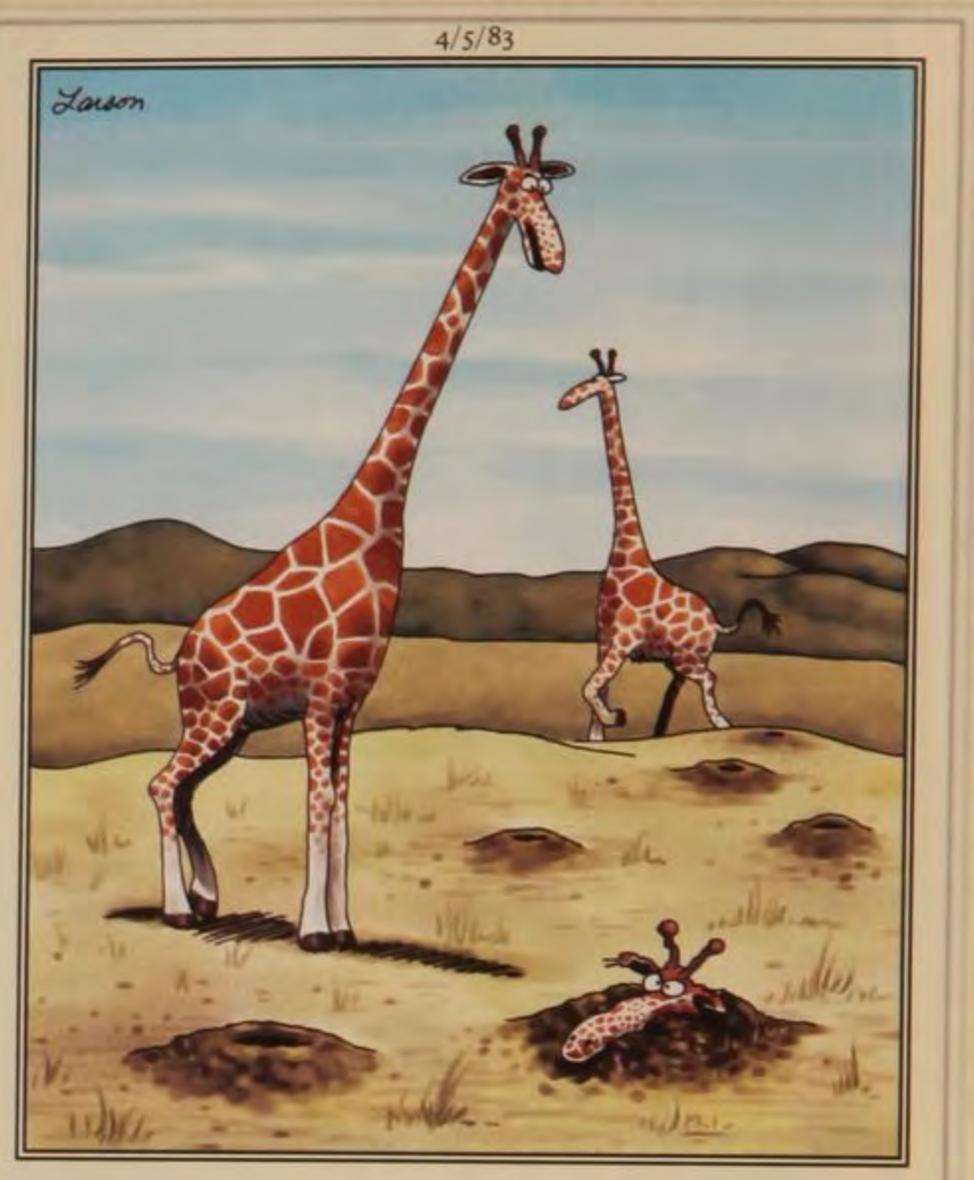
"Dang! Wouldn't ya know it? ... The only waterhole for a hundred miles, and dabsmack in the middle is a giant squid."



"Well, look who's here ... finesse on wings!"

"Kids! Kids! ... The slugs are back!"

April 1983



"You've got to watch out for them gopher holes, Roger."

"This is it, Webster. ... We're onto the secret of migration."

April 1983

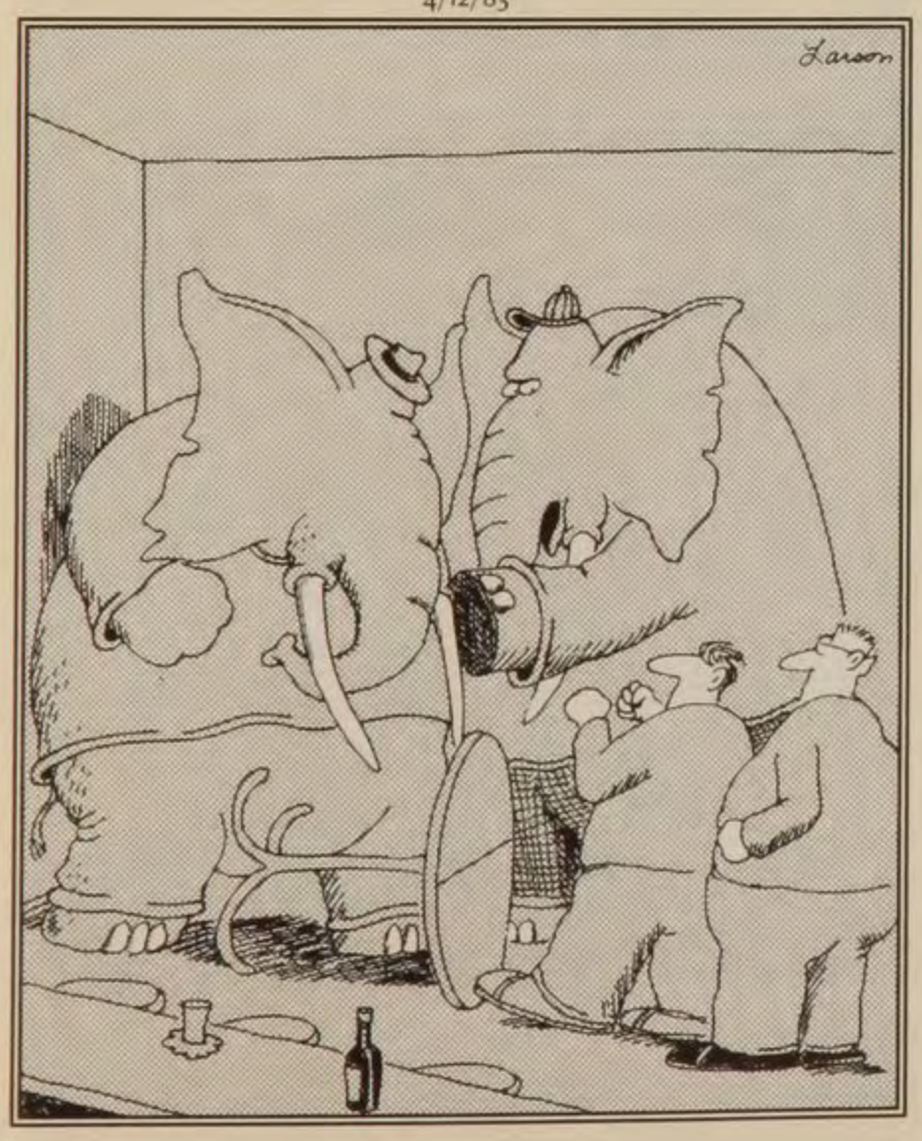
4/16/83

"Just a minute, young man! ... What are you taking from the jungle?"

4/20/83

"Whoa! ... Stuart blew his air sac!"

4/12/83



"Relax, Jerry! ... I'm sure he didn't know you were an elephant when he told that last joke!"

4/13/83

April 1983

4/9/83

"You guys are both witnesses. ... He laughed when my marshmallow caught on fire."

4/15/83

During the night, and as yet unbeknownst to Zelda, Phil had installed a volume knob.

4/18/83

Custer's first stand

April 1983

4/19/83

"Calm down, Edna. ... Yes, it's some giant, hideous insect ... but it could be some giant, hideous insect in need of help."

4/25/83

4/14/83

"I just *can't* go in there, Bart! ... Some feller in there and I are wearin' the same kind of hat!"

4/21/83

Suddenly, amidst all the confusion, Fifi seized the controls and saved the day.

April 1983

4/23/83

"What a find, Williams! The fossilized footprint of a brachiosaurus! ... And a *Homo habilis* thrown in to boot!"

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SECULAR HUMANISM

April 25, 1983

Sentinel Star
P.O. Box 1100
Orlando, Fla 32802
THE FAR SIDE
Att: Gary Larson

Dear Mr. Larson:

I am somewhat puzzled by your cartoon appearing in the Sentinel Star on Sunday, April 24th.

The implication seems to be that our archaeological friends are more interested in their discovery than the fact that a poor human has been stepped on?

However, your cartoon does a disservice to the scientific community by promoting pseudo/science and a blatant disregard for historical accuracy.

The combination of Brachiosaurus and Homo Habilus in the same time period is ludicrous since Brachiosaurus existed 60,000;000 years before Homo Habilus or any form even remotely resembling the human form came on the scene.

Surely, this is exactly what the "Creationist" would like us to believe; that evolution was a one-shot deal instead of a process that took place over billions of years.

I would like to believe that you are very concerned for truth and historical accuracy in disseminating specific information to the public at large.

Your response to my concern is eagerly awaited.

Sincerely yours,

Henry W. Daigneault
DIRECTOR

oc: Jeff Kunerth
Carl Sagan

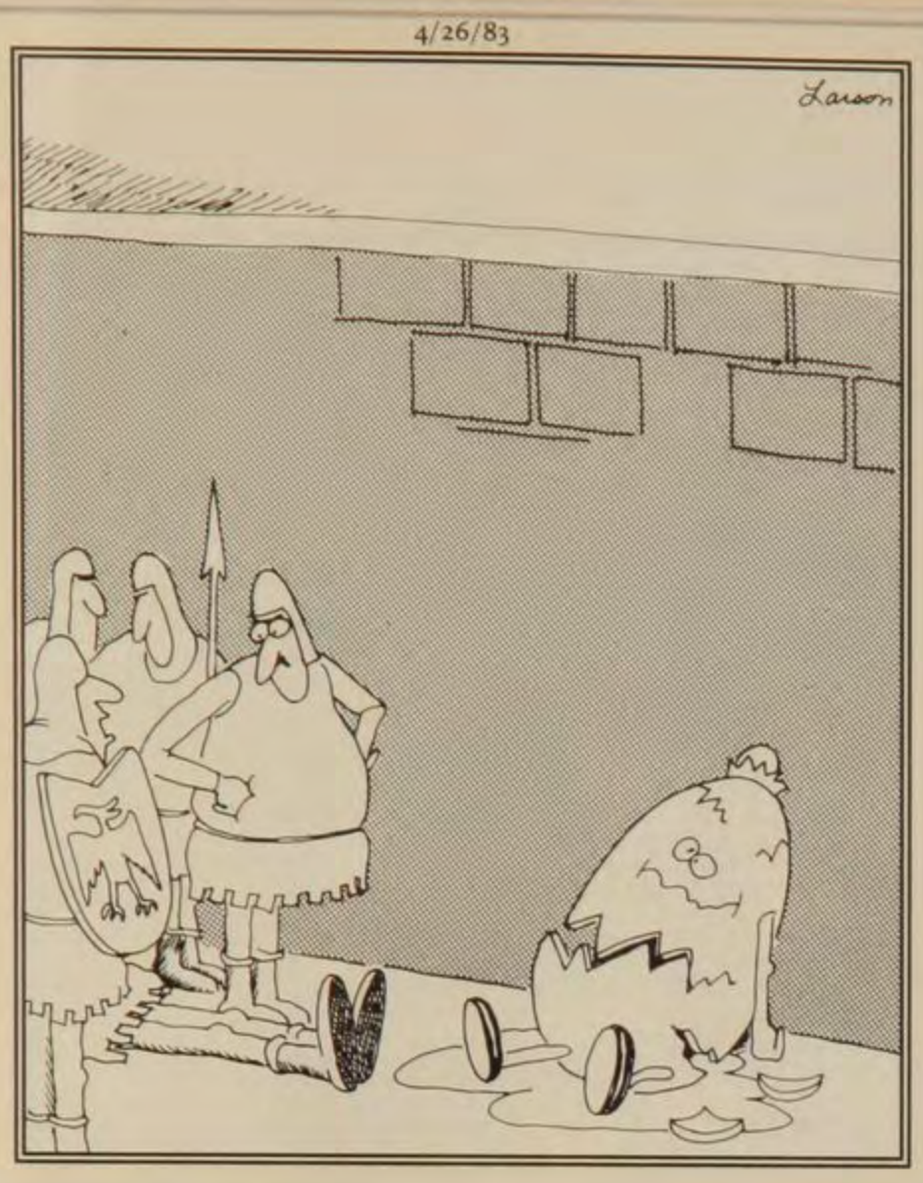
4/22/83

"So! ... You must be the one they call 'The Kid.'"

4/28/83

"Don't shush me—and I don't care if she *is* writing in her little notebook; just tell me where you were last night!"

April 1983



"It's Henderson again, sir. ... He always faints at the sight of yolk."

Continental drift whiplash

"By the way, we're playing cards with the Millers tonight, and Edna says if you promise not to use your X-ray vision, Warren promises not to bring his Kryptonite."

May 1983

"Trapped like rodentia!"

"Wouldn't you know it! ... And always just before a big date!"

"Hey! C'mon! Hold it! Hold it! ... Or someone's gonna get hurt!"

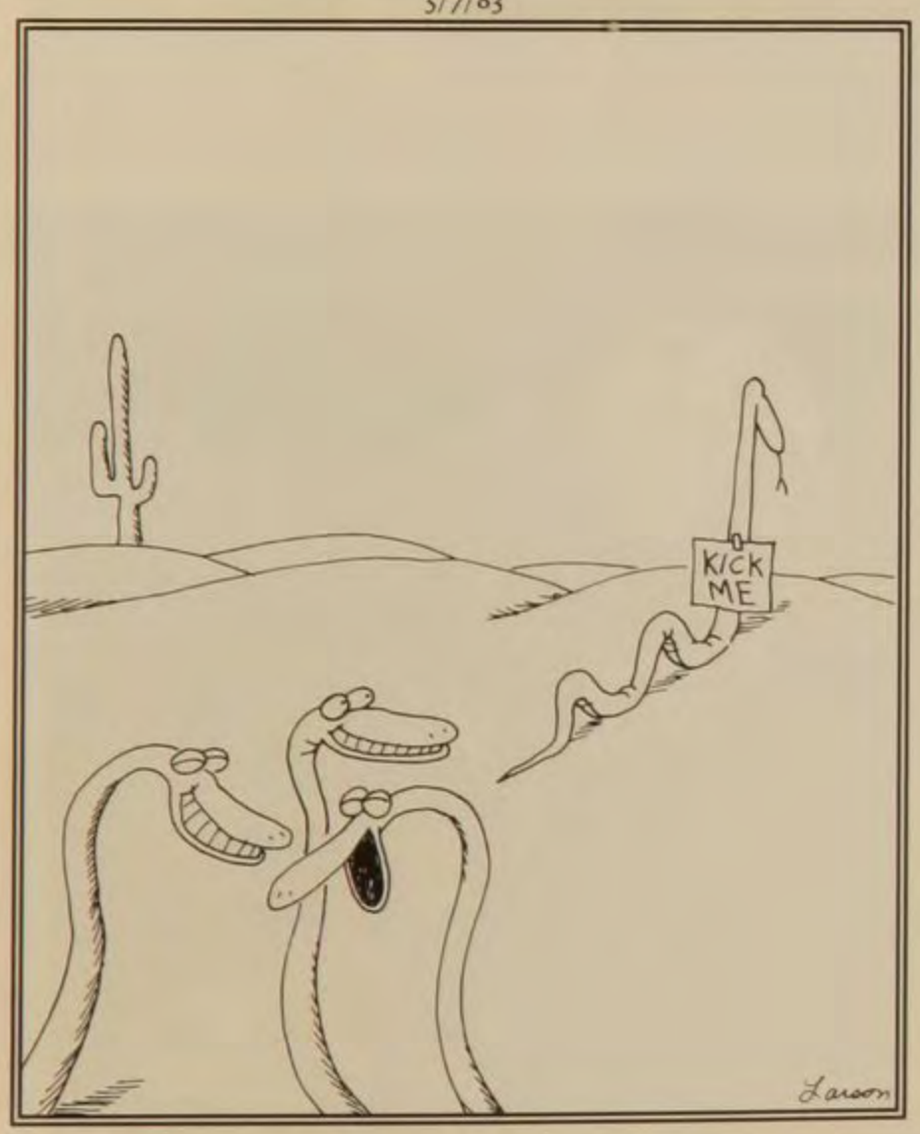
May 1983

5/5/83

5/10/83

"Chief say, 'Oh yeah? ... *Your* horse ugly.'"

5/7/83



5/9/83

May 1983

5/11/83

"Dang!"

5/12/83

"The name is Bill ... Buffalo Bill."

5/21/83

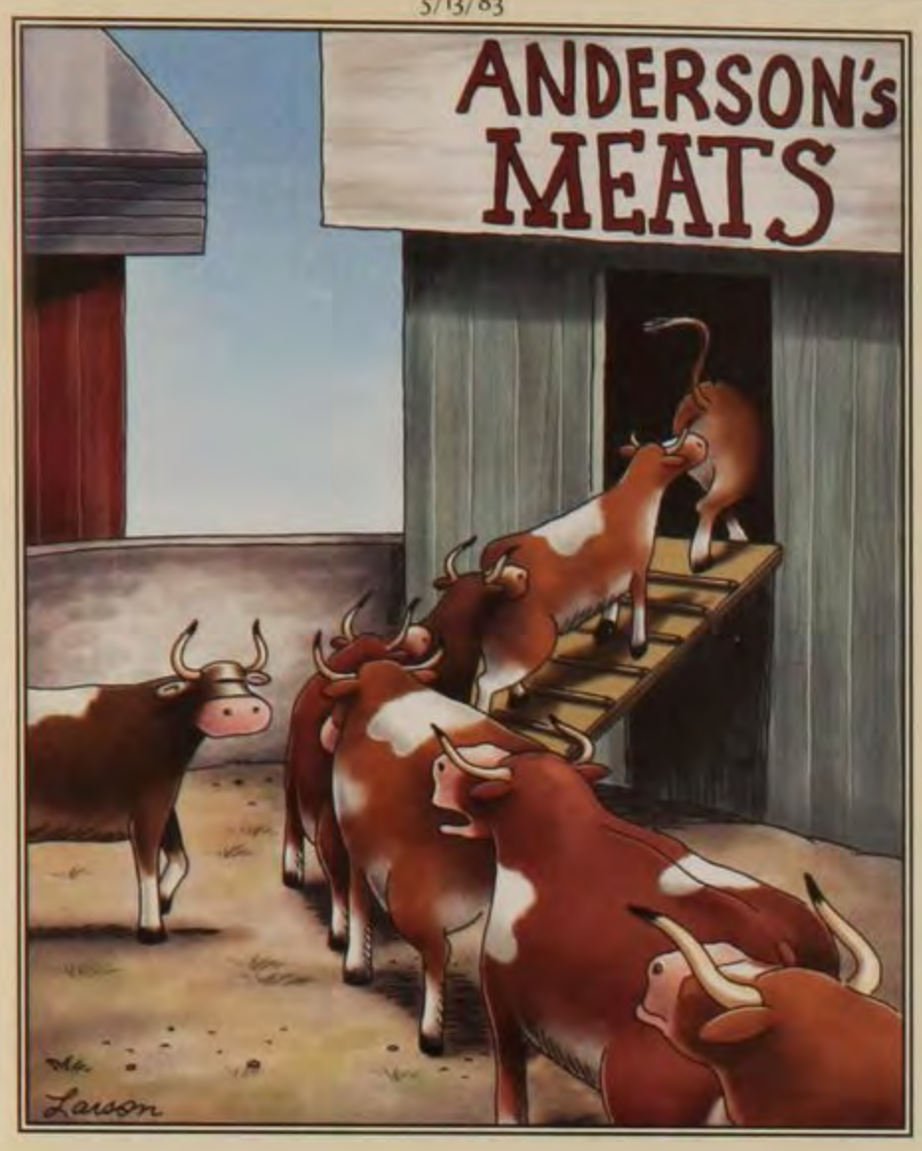
"Go back sleep, Thag. ... You only dream we live just so long then die."

5/23/83

"And, if you squint your eyes just right, you can see the zork in the Earth."

May 1983

5/13/83



"Hey! You! ... No cutting in!"

5/14/83

"Okay, okay, little Ahab. ... Which one is it going to be?"

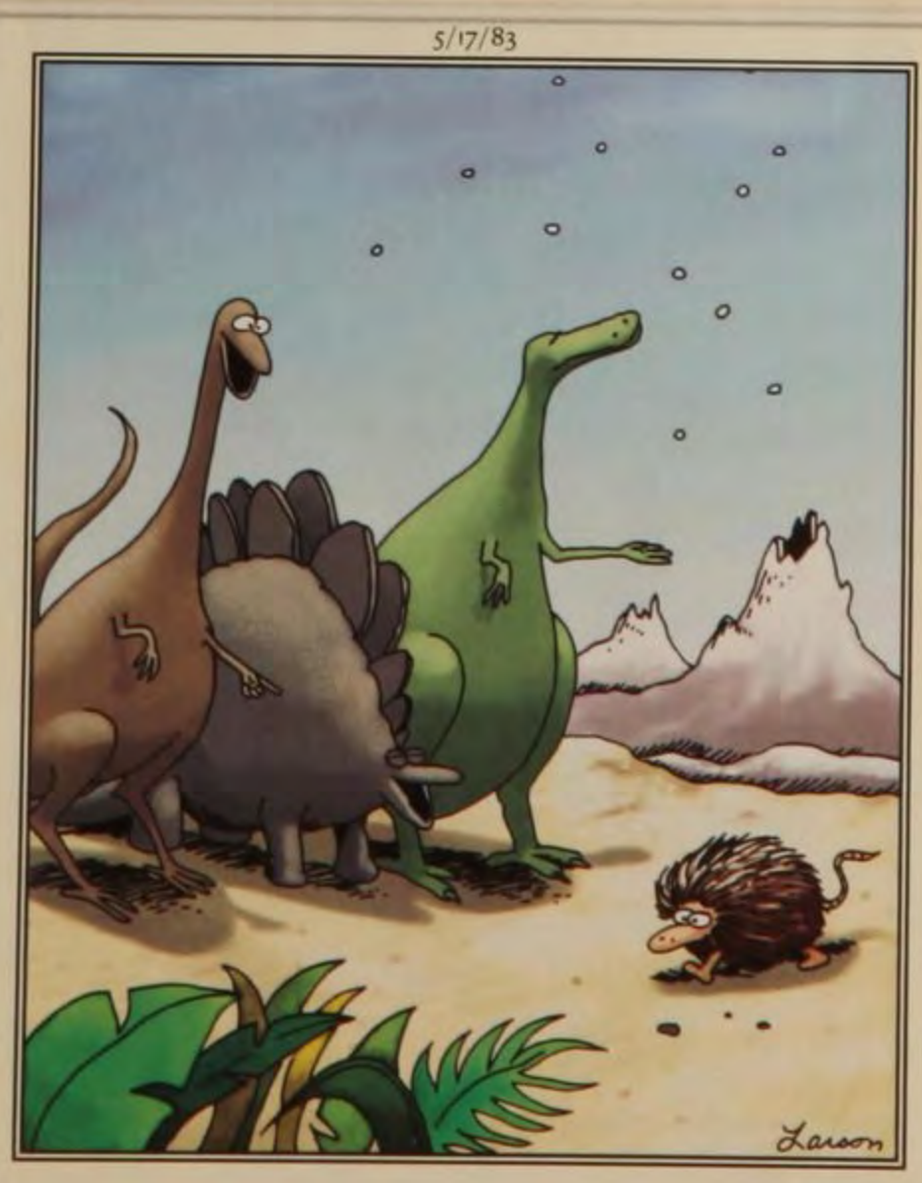
5/24/83

"Well, shoot ... I can never tell whether these things are done or not."

5/25/83

May 1983

"And the murderer is ... THE BUTLER! Yes, the butler—
who, I'm convinced, first gored the Colonel to death
before trampling him to smithereens."



"I wouldn't do that, mister. ... Old Zeek's
liable to fire that sucker up."

May 1983

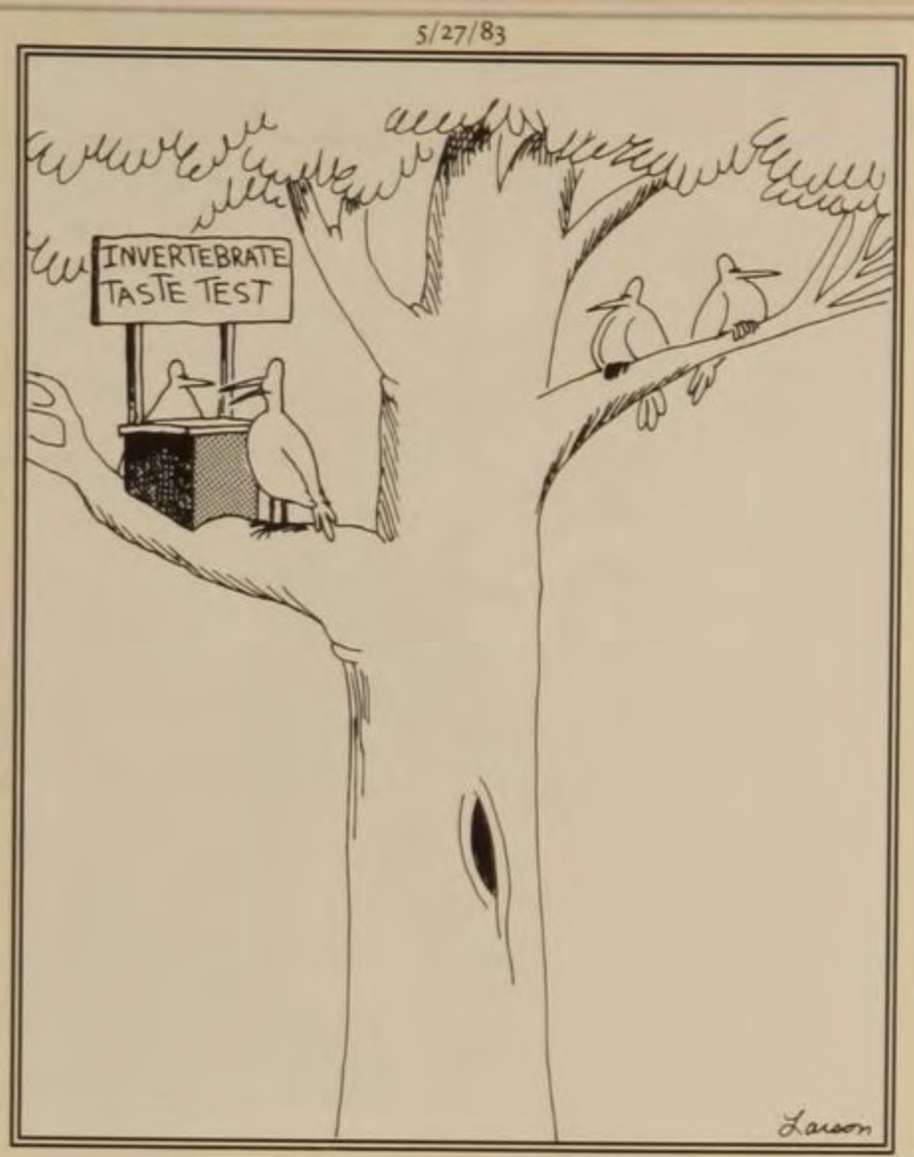
5/19/83

5/20/83

"Well, good heavens! I can't believe you men. ... *I've* got some rope!"

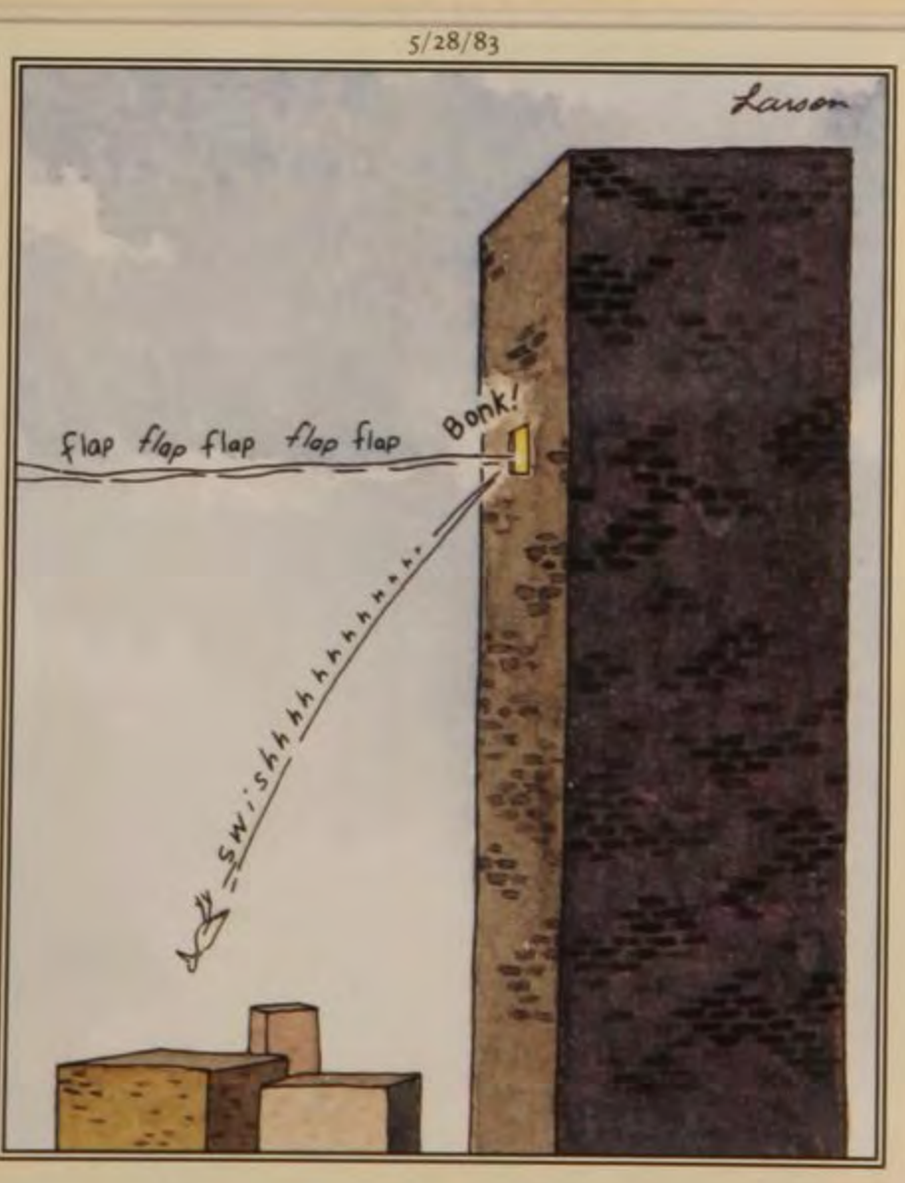
5/26/83

May 1983



"Mmmmmm. ... Nope ... nope. ... I don't like that at all. ... Too many legs."

"First!"



"Spiders, scorpions, and insecticides, oh my! ... Spiders, scorpions, and insecticides, oh my! ..."

June 1983

6/1/83

"Oh, is that so? ... Well, if there's anything I hate worse than a big, stupid carrot, it's a big, stupid banana!"

6/2/83

"Well, don't look at me, idiot! ... I *said* we should've flown!"

6/3/83

"What did I say, Alex? ... Every time we invite the Zombies over, we all end up just sitting around staring at each other."

6/9/83

Stupid birds

June 1983

6/4/83

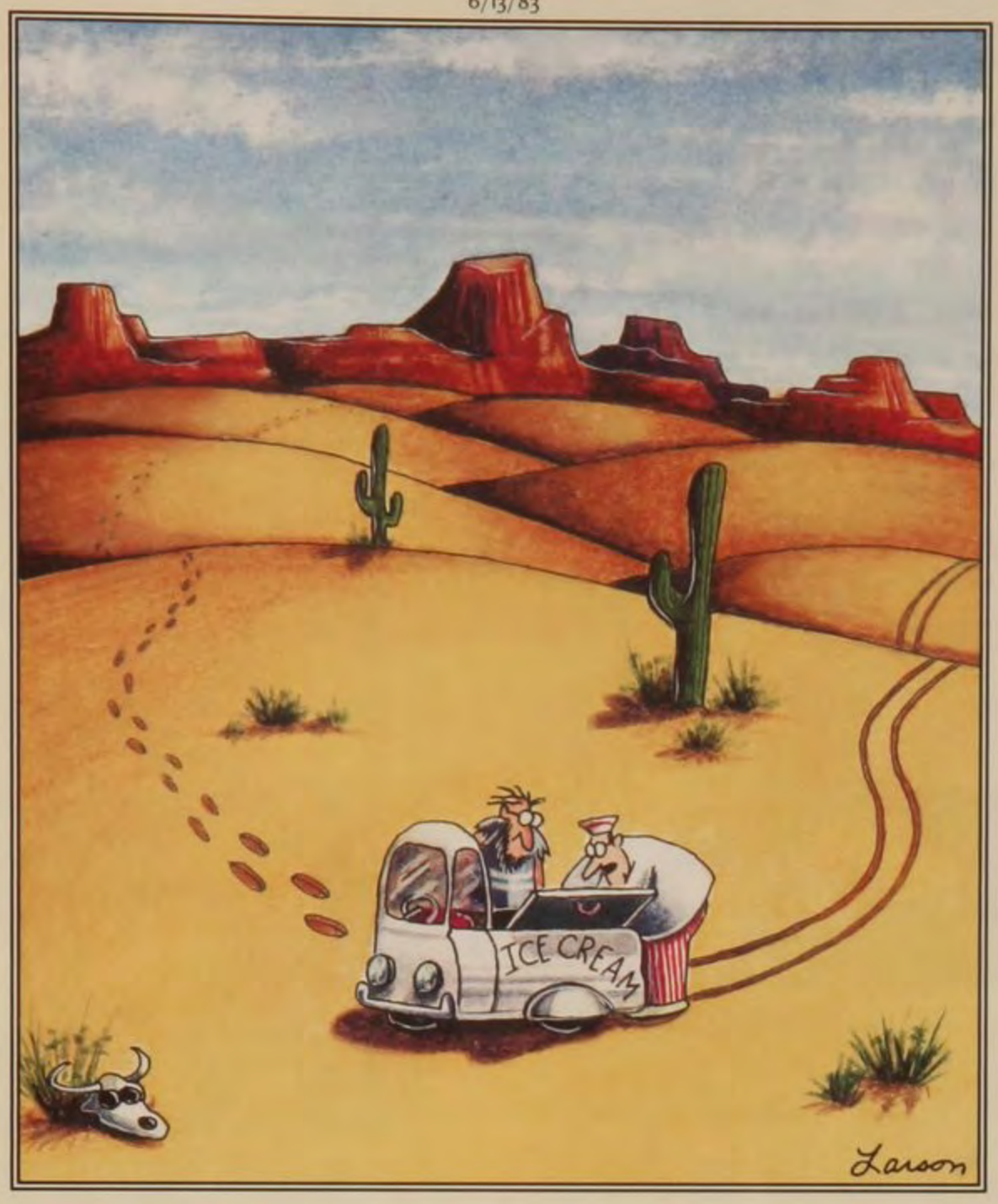
6/6/83

6/7/83

"Well, there it goes again. ... Every night when we bed down, that confounded harmonica starts in."

June 1983

6/13/83



"Let's see. ... No orange ... no root beer ... no fudgesickles. ... Well, for crying out loud! ... Am I out of everything?"

6/8/83

"Well, hey ... these things just snap right off."

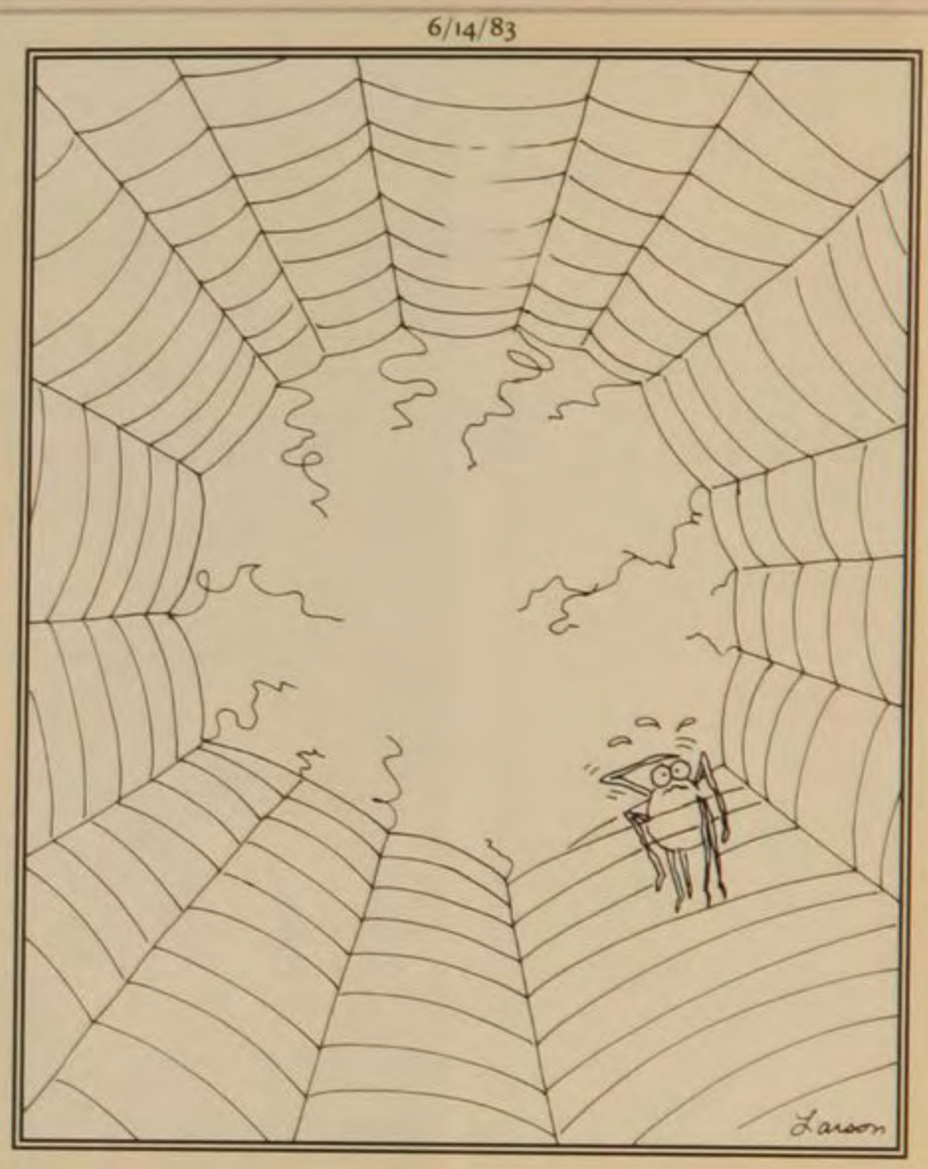
6/11/83

"Take me to your *stove*? ... You idiot! Give me that book!"

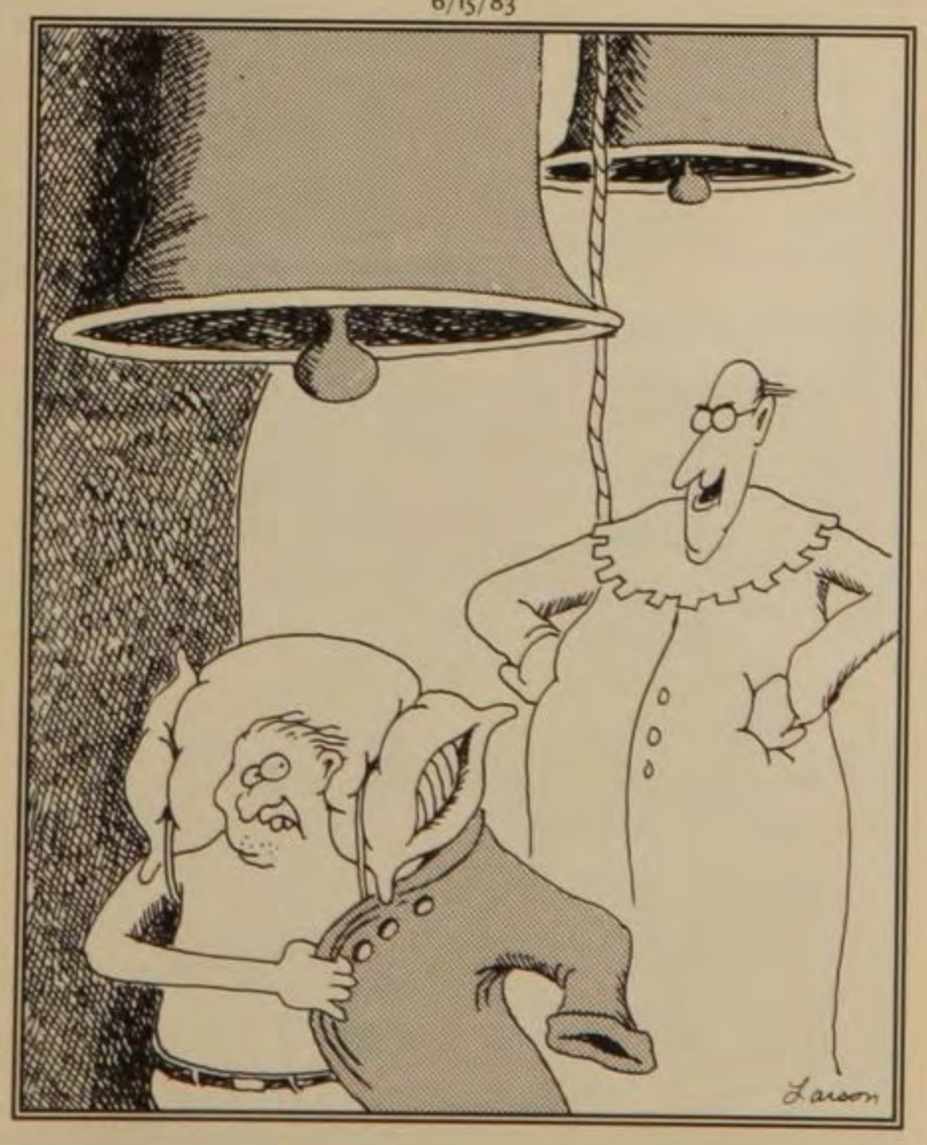
June 1983

6/10/83

6/14/83



6/15/83



"Aha! ... My suspicions confirmed!"

6/16/83

"I *said* I wasn't interested. ... Now please remove your foot from the cave."

June 1983

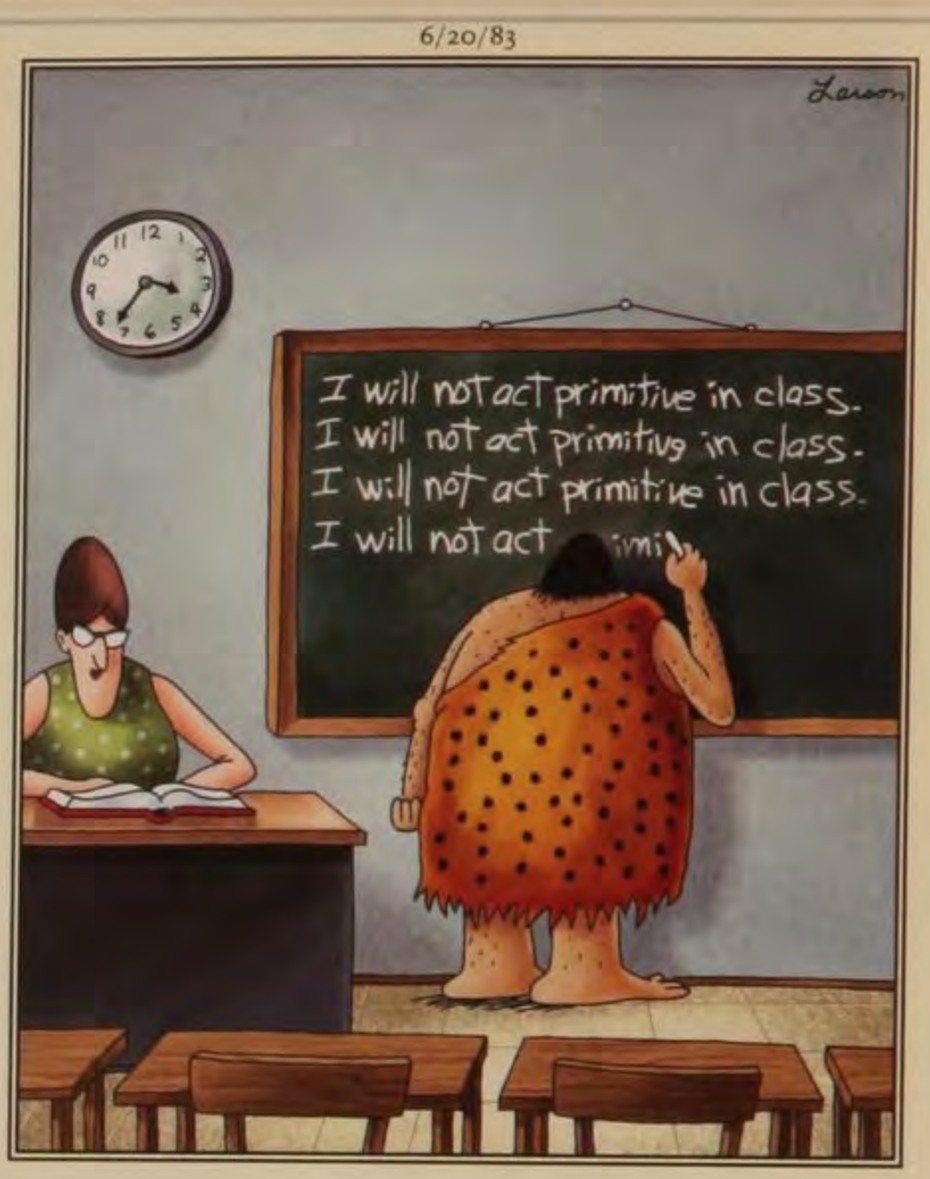
"Oh, that's Bernie Harrison from down the block. ... Bernie has lost his mind."

"Blast! The controls are jammed! ... We're headed straight for Mr. Sun!"

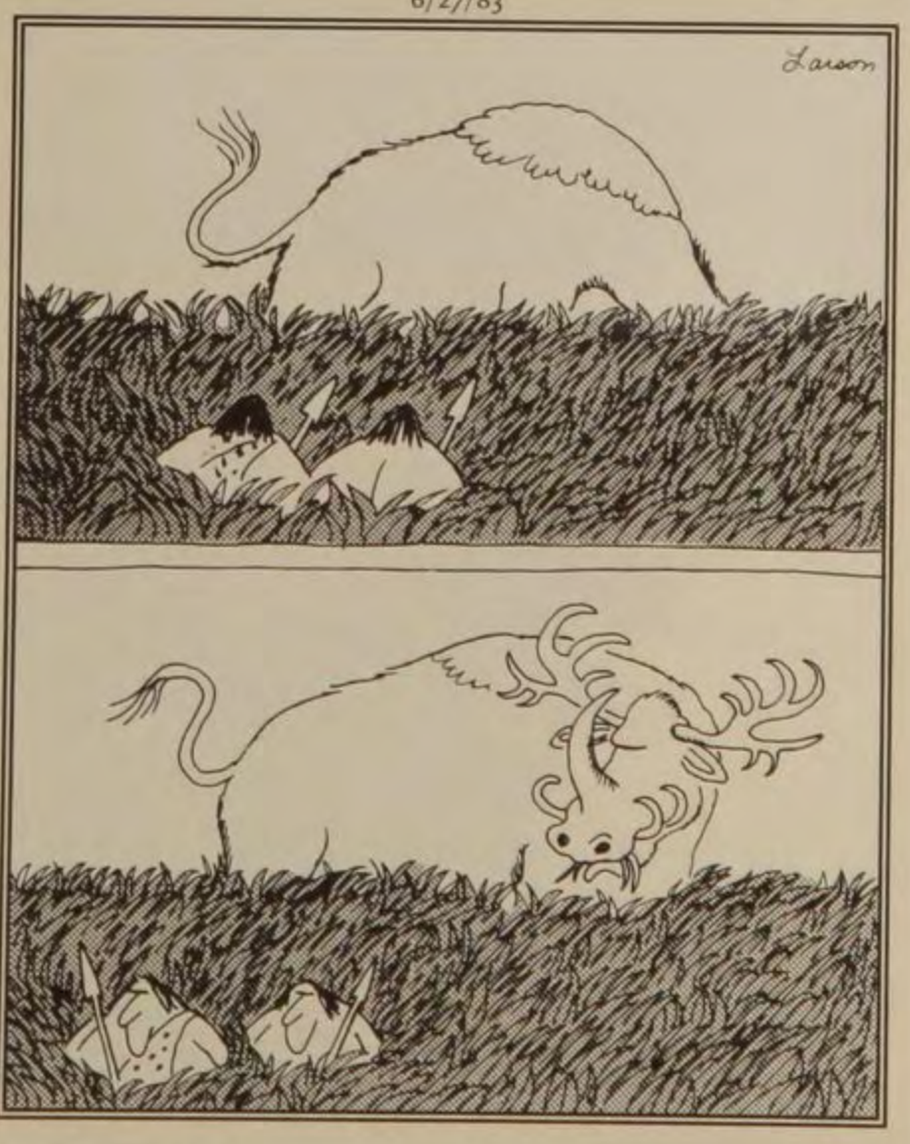
June 1983

6/18/83

6/20/83



6/27/83



Primitive man's ability to reason

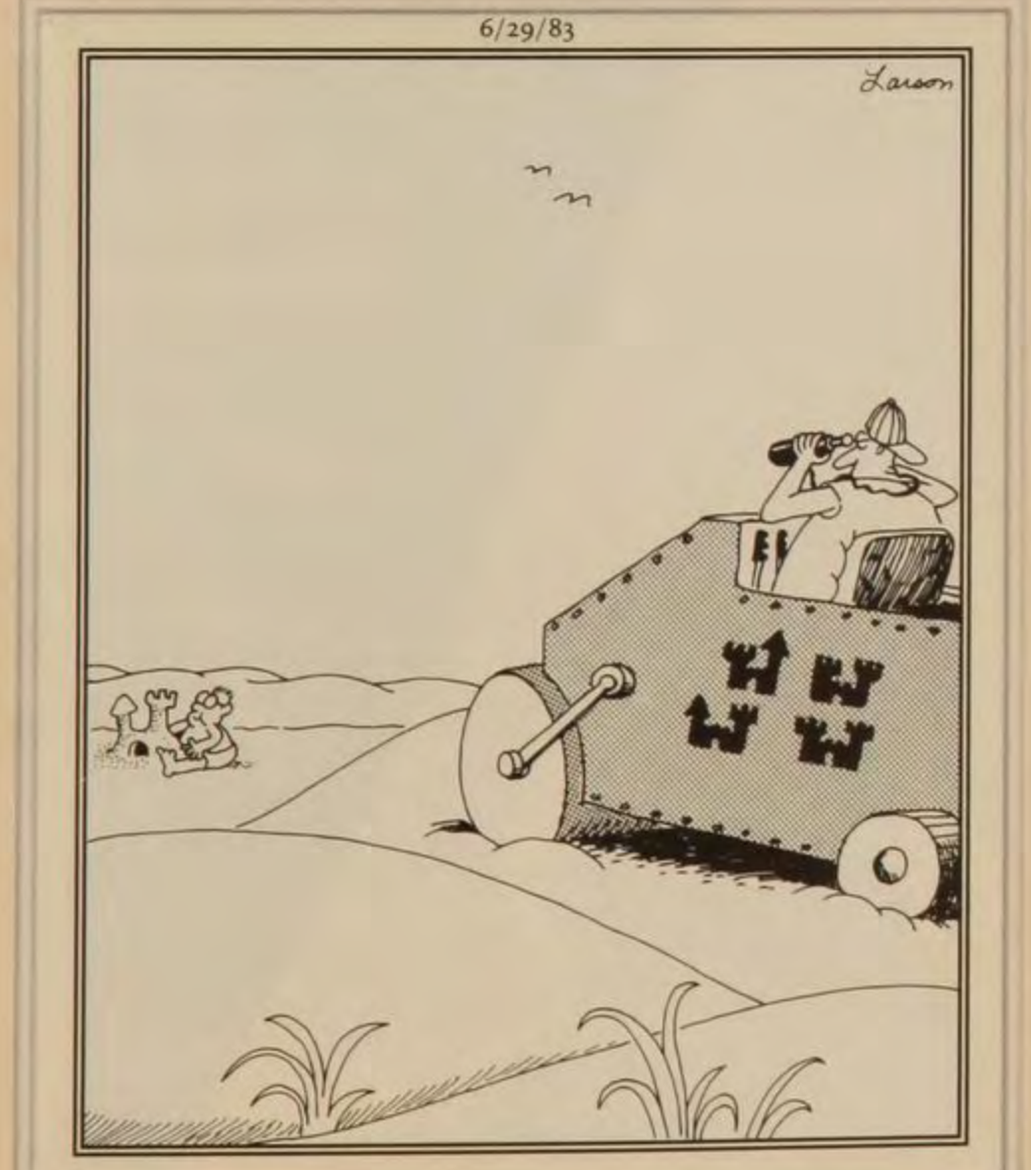
6/28/83

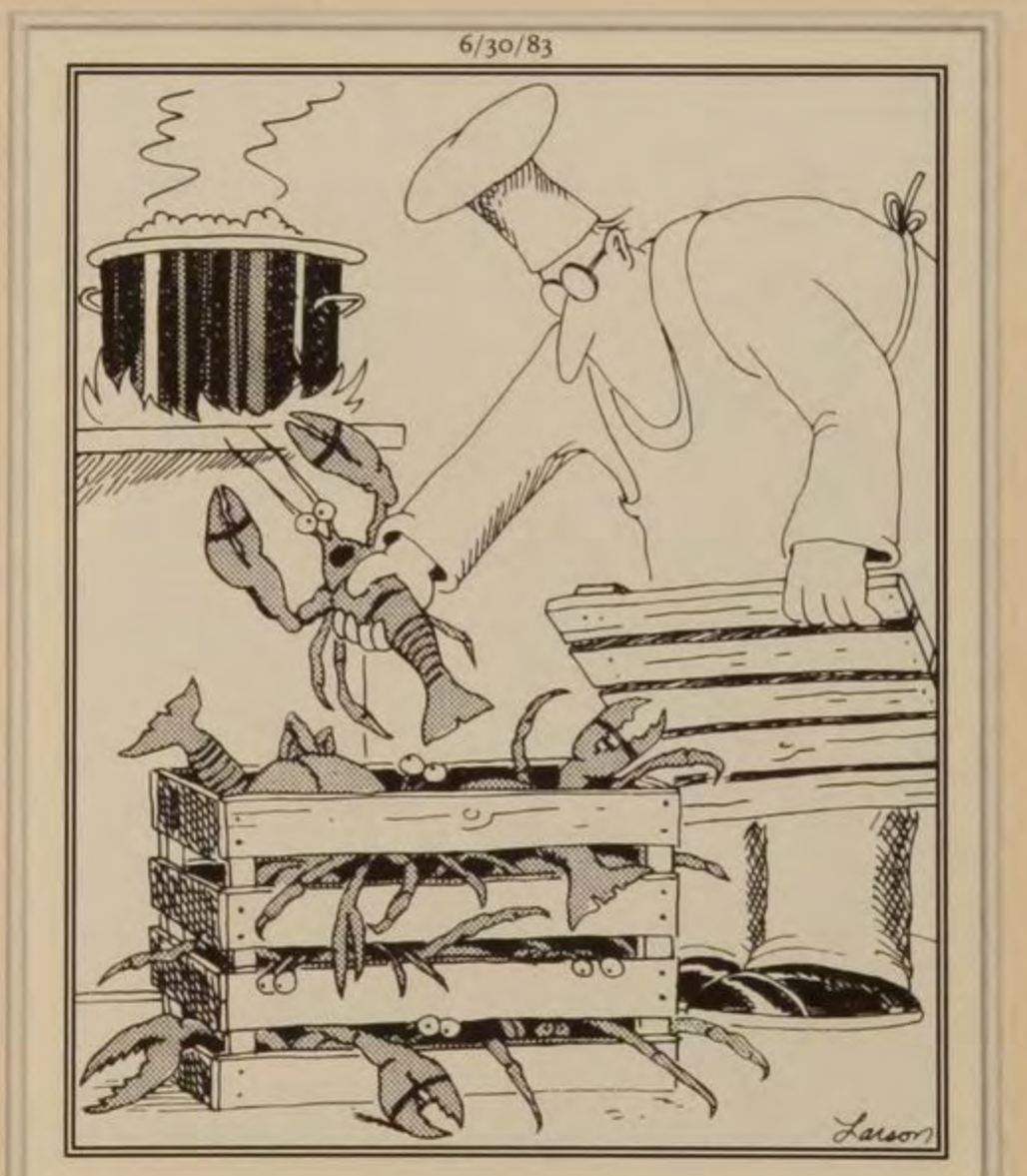
"What? ... Again?"

June 1983

"Hang him, you idiots! Hang him! ...
'String him up' is a figure of speech!"

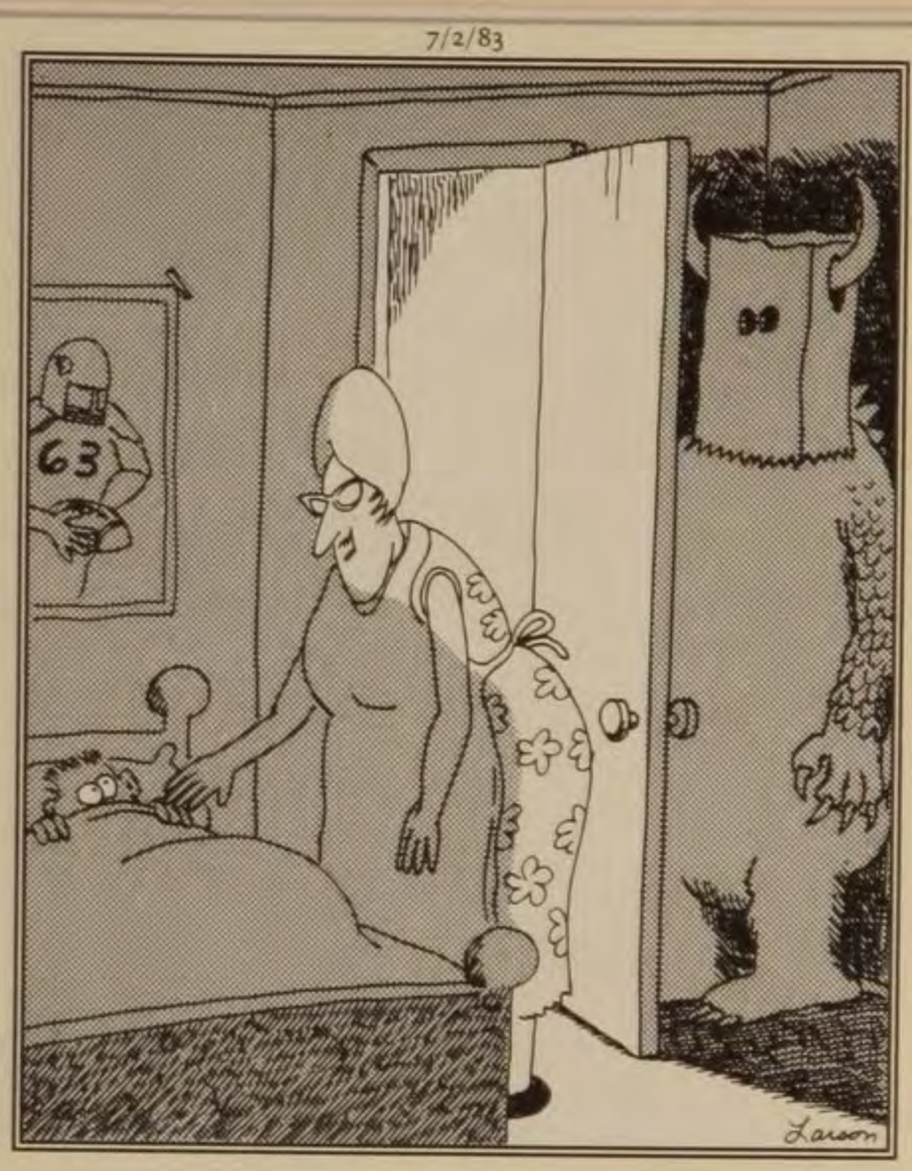
Ant games





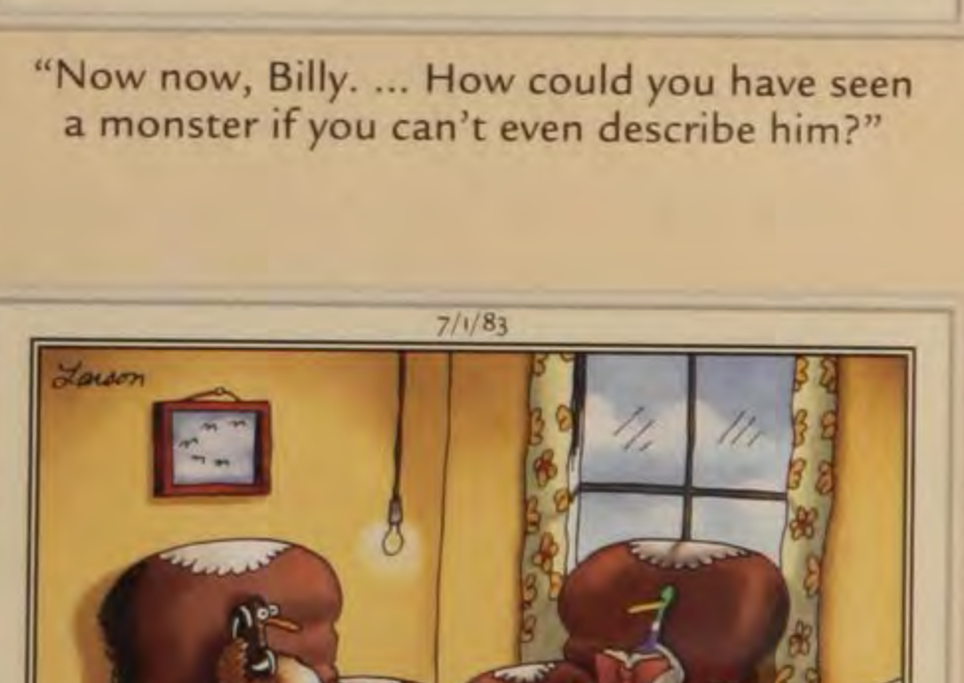
"Auntie Em, Auntie Em! ... There's no place
like home! ... There's no place like home!"

July 1983



"Now now, Billy. ... How could you have seen a monster if you can't even describe him?"

"Sally, this is Larry and his brother, Eddie. ... Larry used to be an only child until the gardener hacked him in half."



Obscene duck call

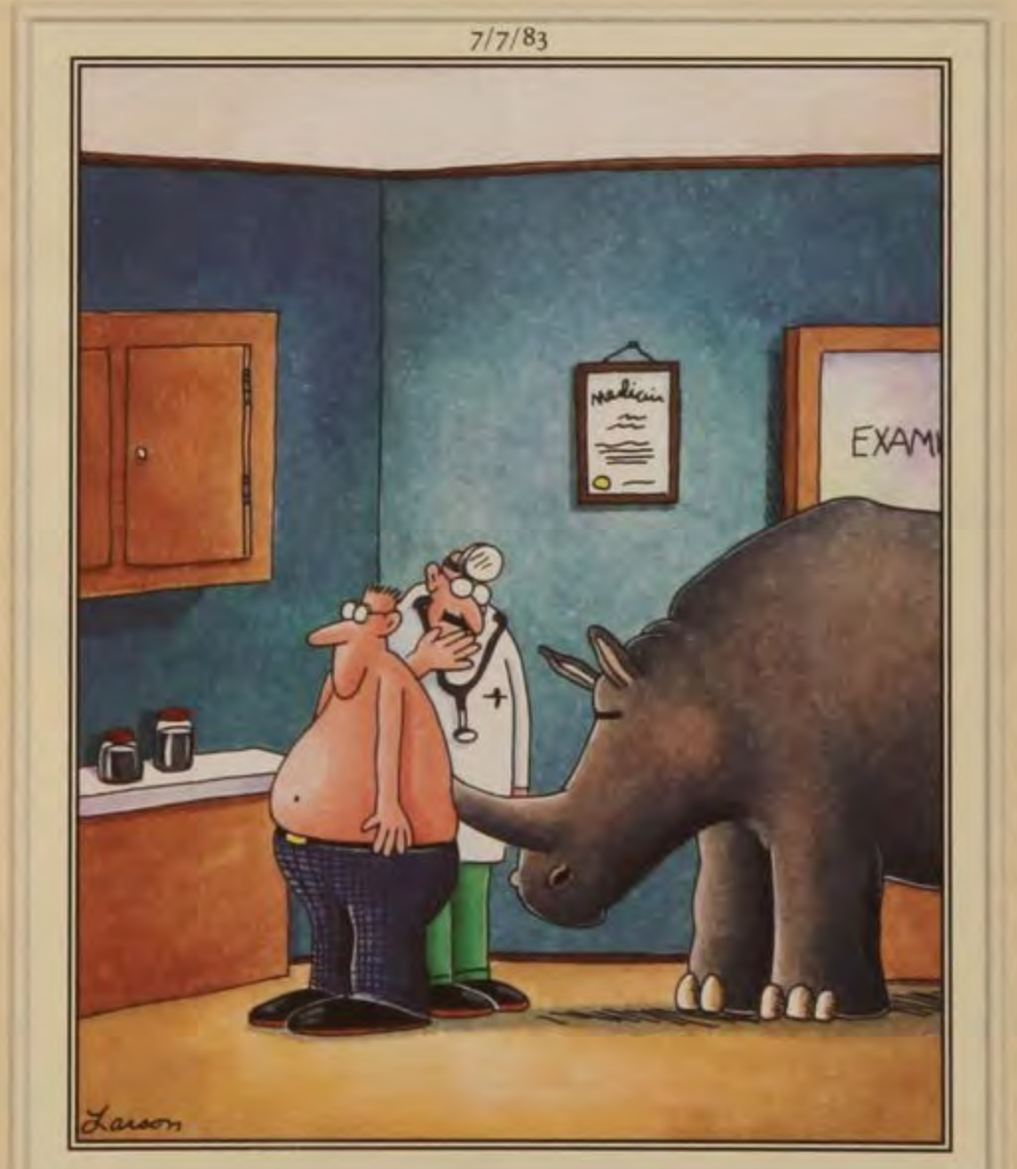
"Wait a minute! Isn't anyone here a real sheep?"

July 1983

"Oo! Watch out! ... The walls are pointy!"

"Darlene is going with some new guy. ...
And *he's* got a shell."

"Okay ... which of you is the one they call
'Old-One-Eyed-Dog-Face'?"



"Wait a minute here, Mr. Crumbley. ...
Maybe it isn't kidney stones after all."

July 1983

"So, Professor Jenkins! ... My old nemesis! ... We meet again, but this time the advantage is mine! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Blast! ... You raise a dog from a pup, and suddenly one day he turns out to be a chicken killer!"

"Whoa! ... Wrong room."

July 1983

7/18/83

"'This dangerous viper, known for its peculiar habit of tenaciously hanging from one's nose, is vividly colored.'... Oo! Murray! Look! ... Here's a picture of it!"

7/15/83

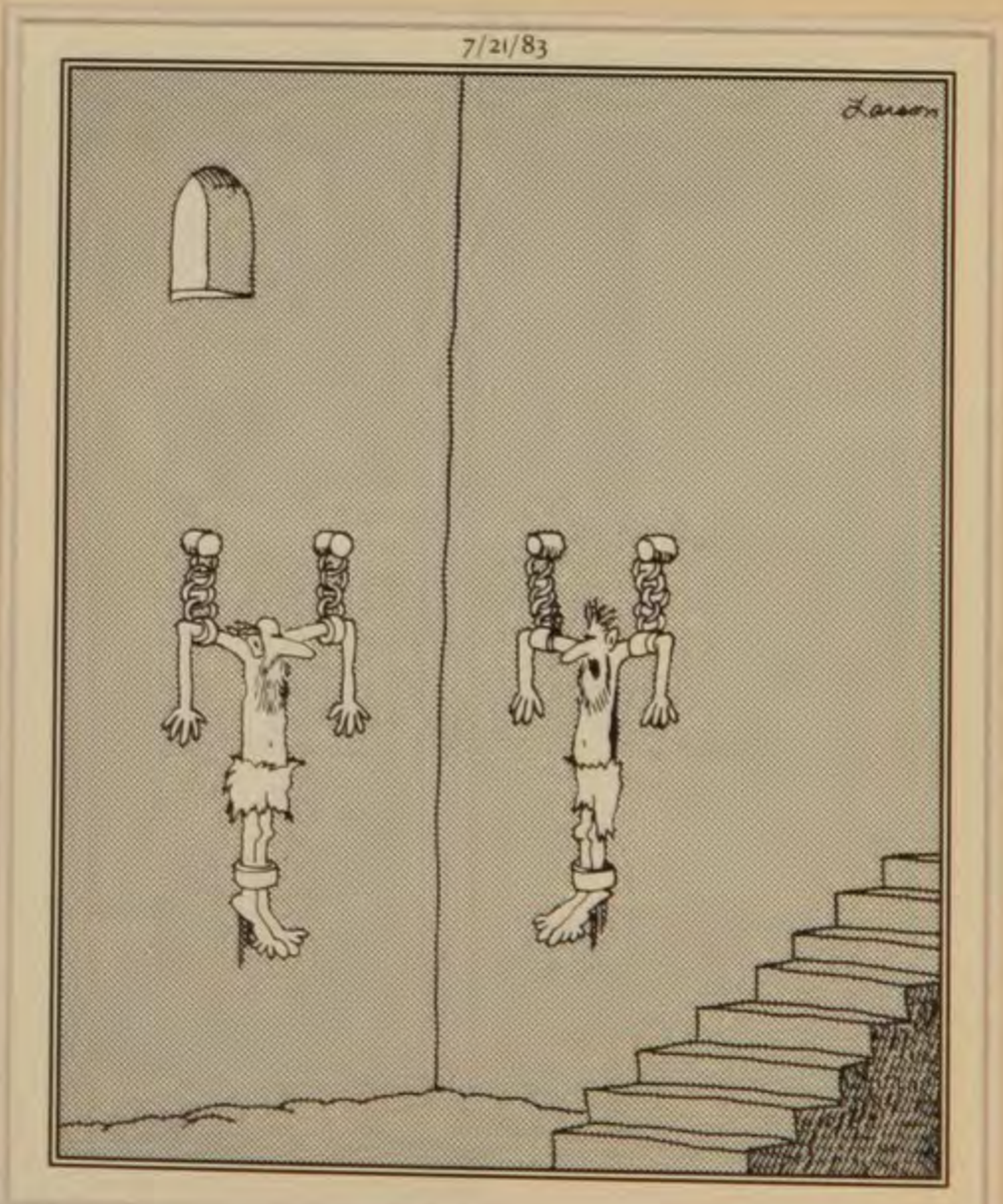
7/19/83

July 1983

Suddenly, only a mile into the race,
Ernie gets a nose cramp.

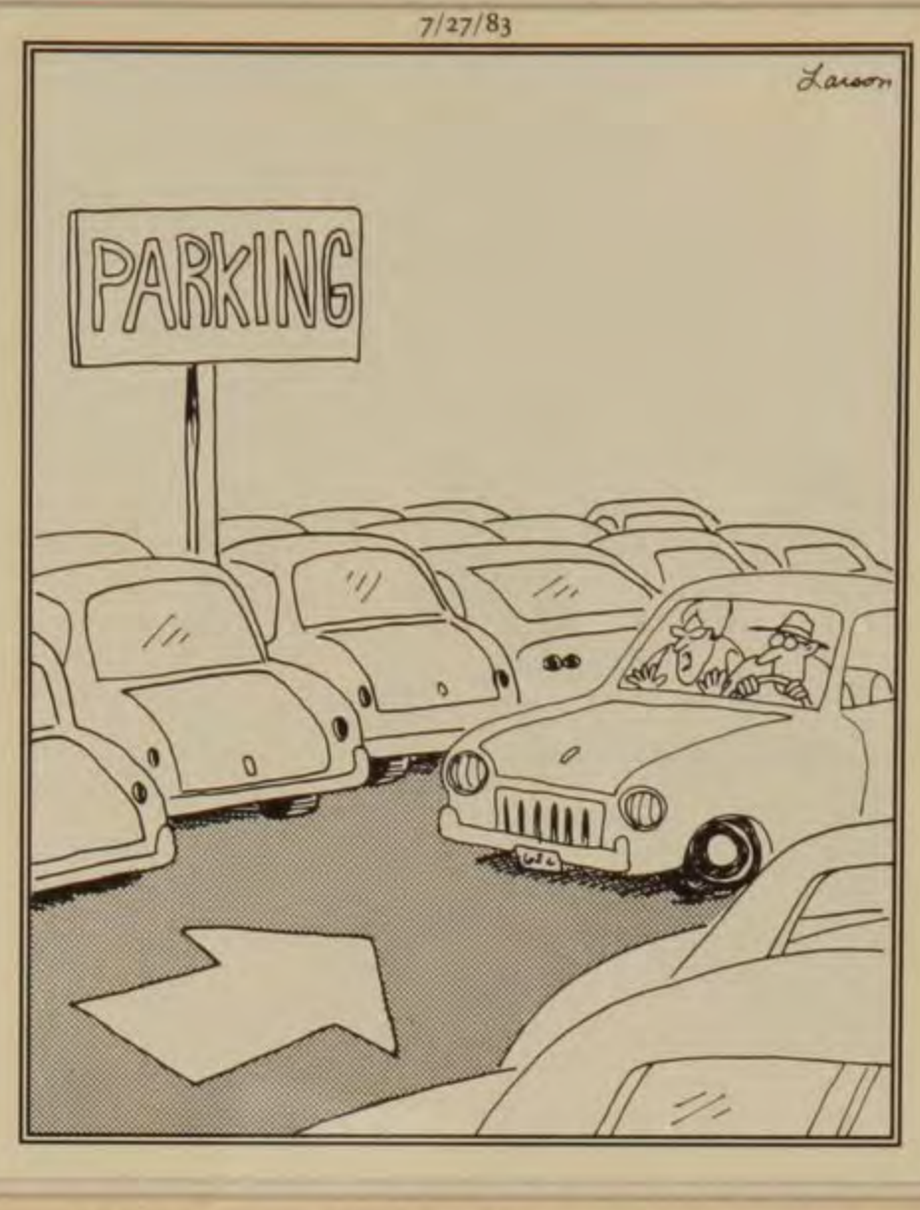
"Keep your rifle handy, Boswell. ... That
wounded lion could be anywhere
in this tall grass."

"Sorry, mister, but this is what we do to
cattle rustlers in these parts."



"You idiot! ... Now this time wait for me to
finish the first 'row row row your boat'
before you come in!"

July 1983



"Harold, you fool! ... The arrow goes the other way! ... WE'RE DOOMED!"

Primitive Man leaves the trees.

July 1983

7/23/83

7/25/83

"Yes, yes, already, Warren! ... There *is* film in the camera!"

7/26/83

"I judge a man by the shoes he wears, Jerry."

7/29/83

August 1983

8/1/83

"Now this next slide, gentlemen, demonstrates the awesome power of our twenty megaton ... for crying out loud! Not again!"

8/3/83

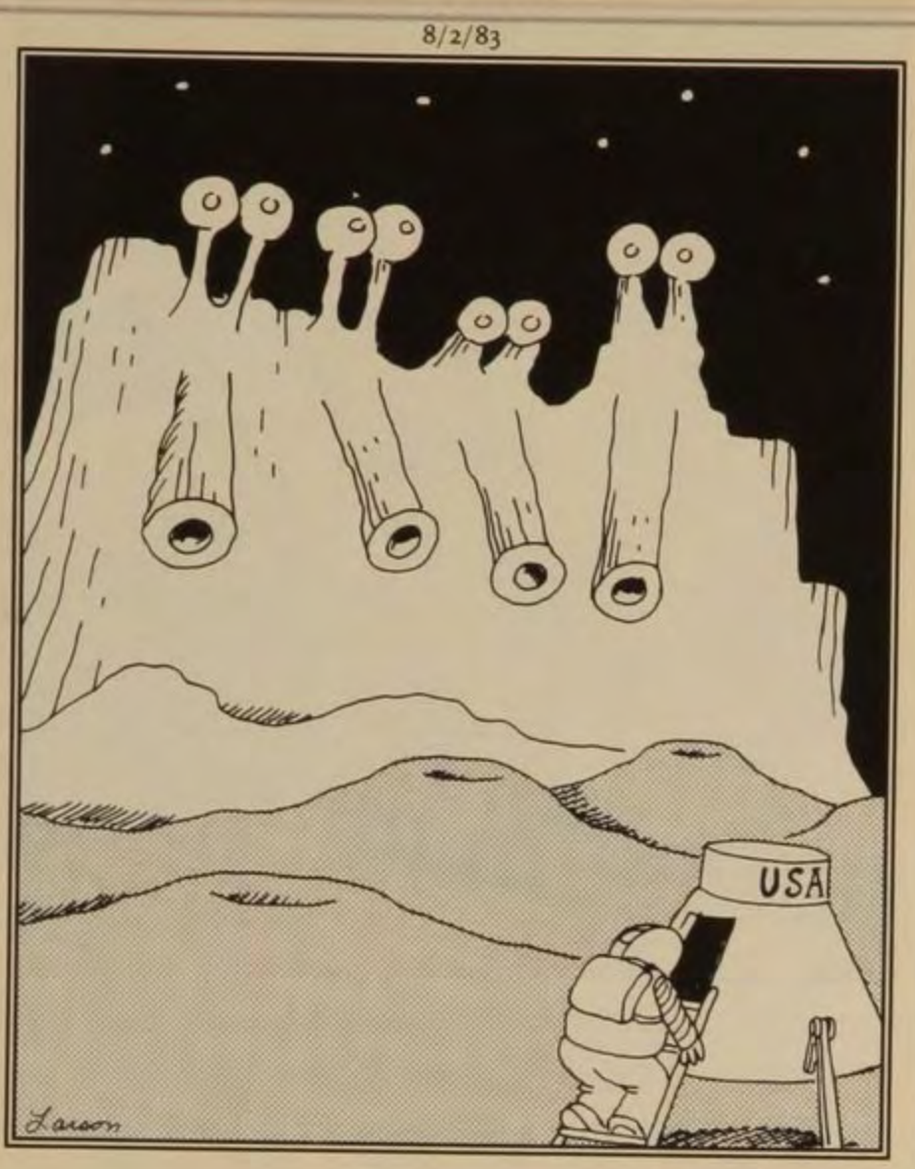
"HALT! ... Okay! Johnson! Higgins! ... You both just swallow what you've got and knock off these water fights once and for all!"

8/6/83

8/9/83

Never park your horse in a bad part of town.

August 1983



"Fool! ... Give me those controls! ... You're just dang lucky both barn doors were open!"

While Farmer Brown was away, the cows got into the kitchen and were having the time of their lives—until Betsy's unwitting discovery.

August 8, 1983

Gary Larson
Chronicle Features
c/o Washington Post
1150 15th St. NW
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Mr. Larson:

Please help us settle this minor family dispute. My son maintains that Betsy's unwitting discovery was finding steaks in the freezer. My husband and I believe that Betsy found Farmer Brown's supply of frozen bull semen.

Which of the above is the right answer - or, are they both wrong? Did you have something more delightful in mind? What? We can hardly bear to wait for your answer.

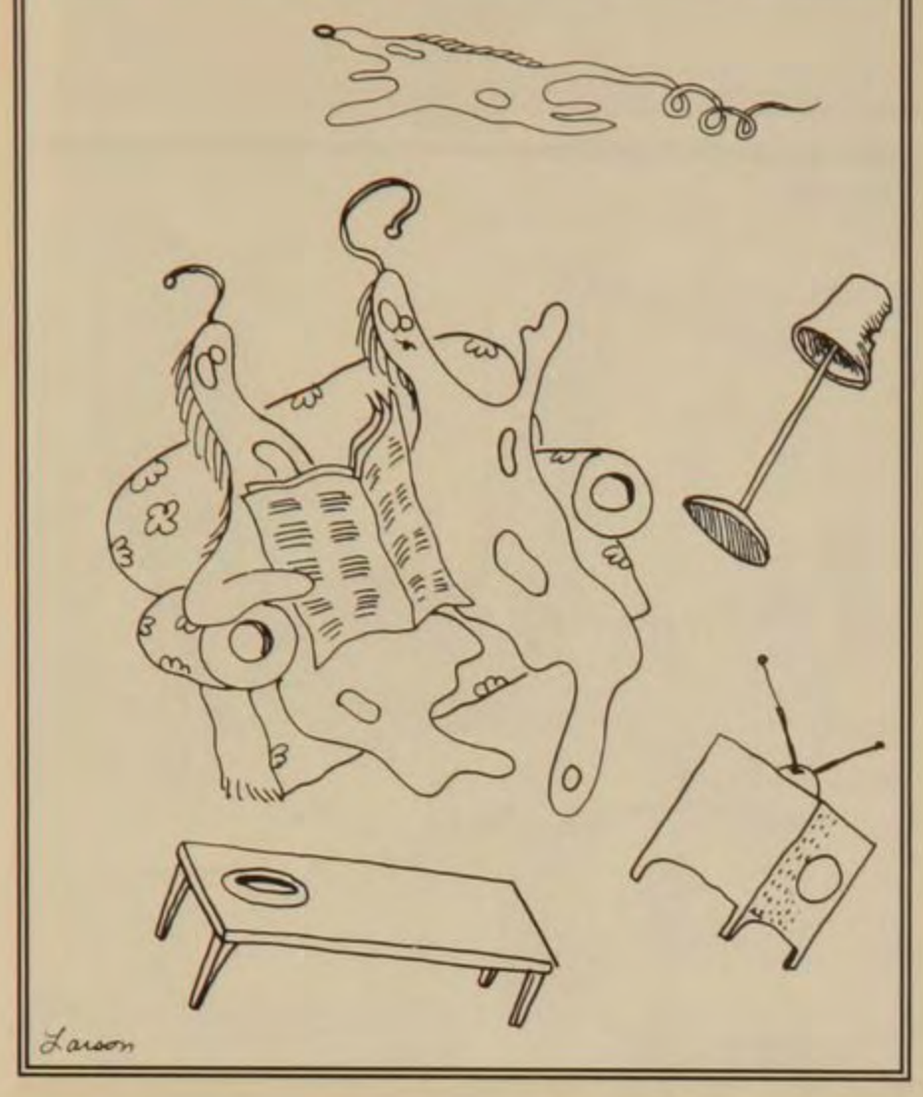
Thank you for making our mornings a real pleasure. Your cartoons are weird, but deliscious.

Sincerely,

Janet A. Dinerman

August 1983

8/10/83



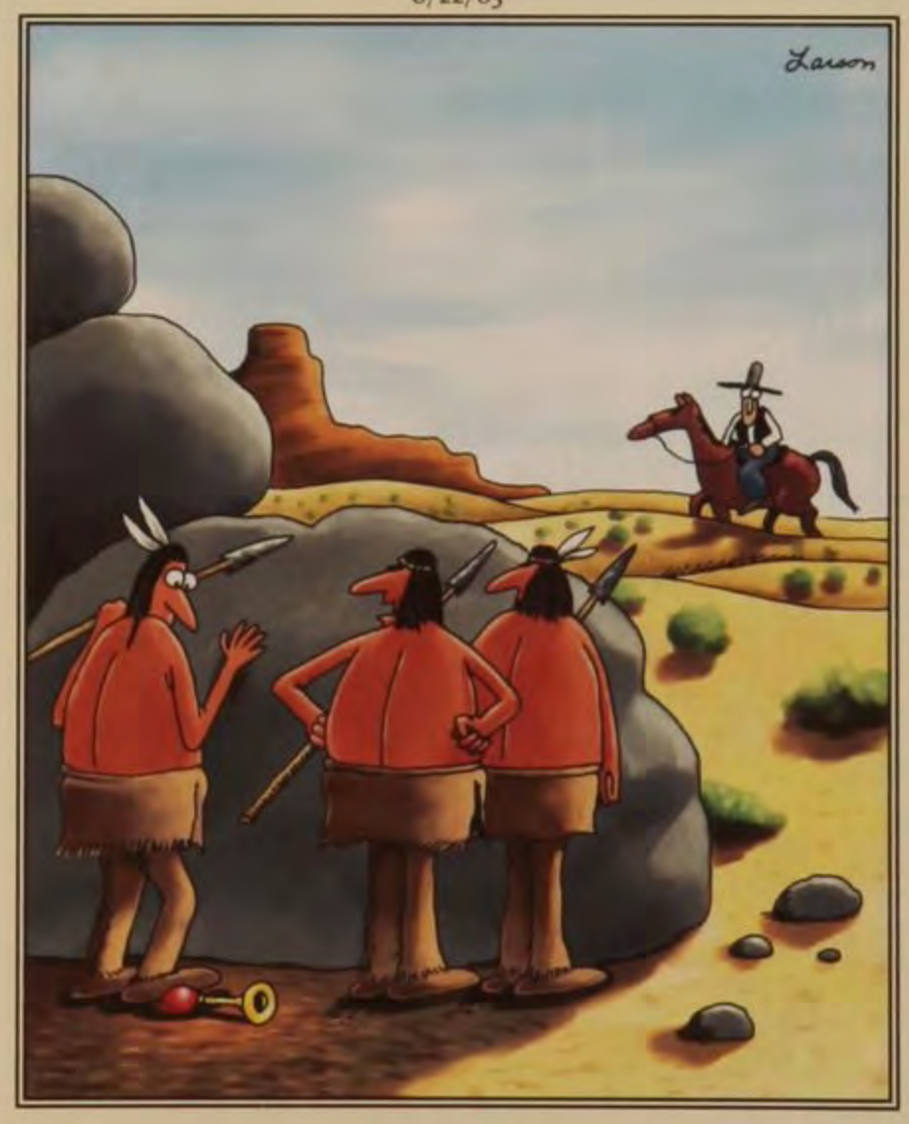
Things that live in a drop of water, and some of their furniture.

8/5/83

8/17/83

"Hey! Look at Red Bear! ... Waaaaaait ... *that* not real!"

8/22/83



"And you call yourself an Indian!"

August 1983

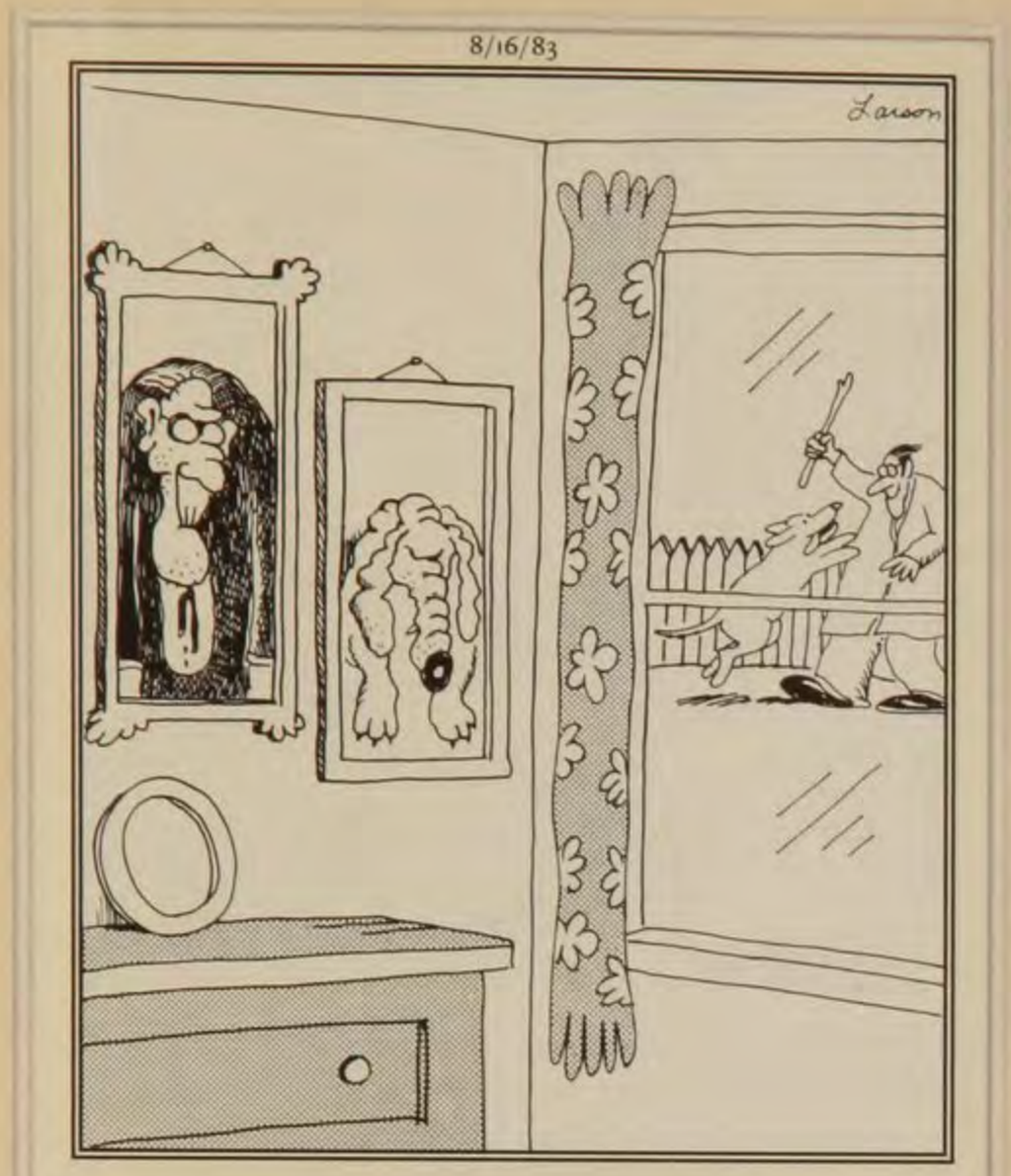
"What? ... *Another* request
for 'Old McDonald'?"

"Blast! Caught in another tide pool! ...
And here comes some damn beachcomber!"

On Oct. 23, 1927, three days after its
invention, the first rubber band is tested.

"Wait! Spare me! ... I've got a wife, a home,
and over a thousand eggs laid in the jelly!"

August 1983



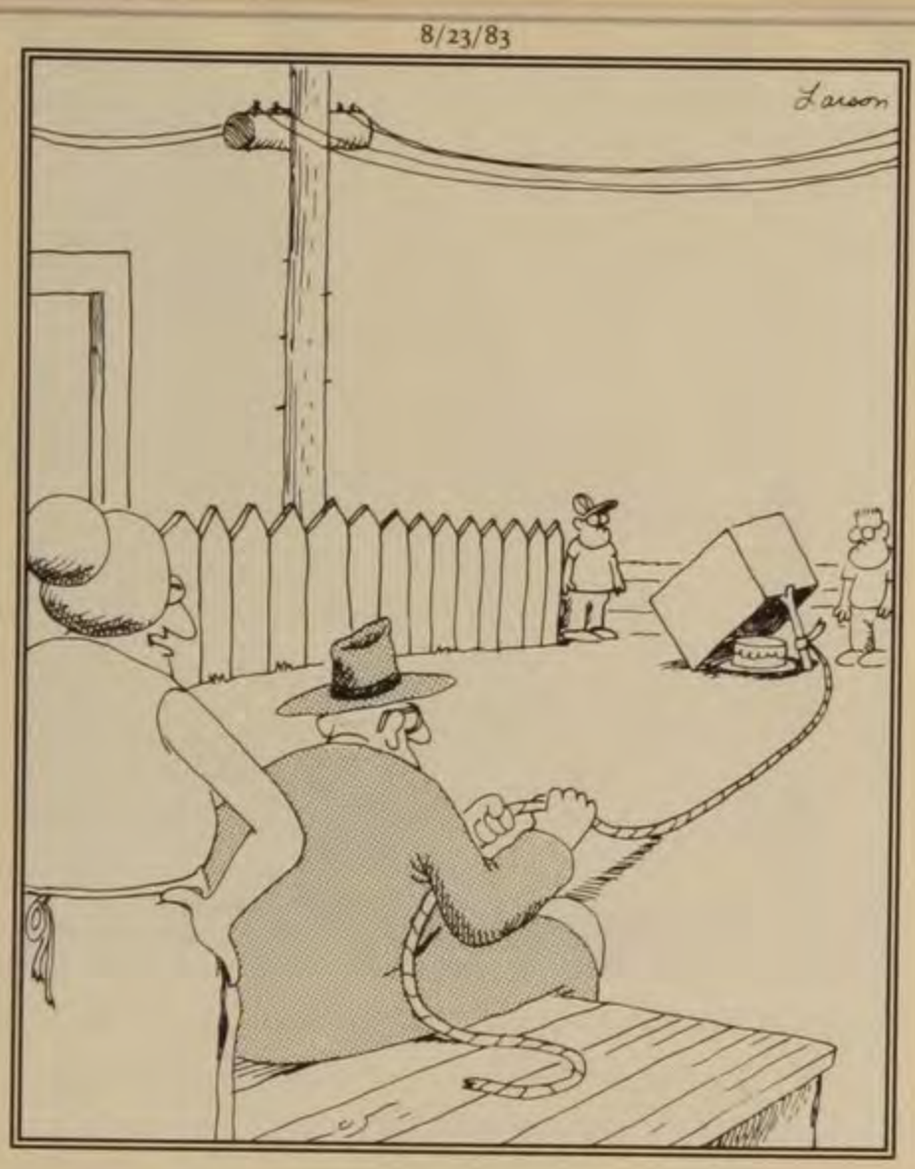
The Portrait of Dorian Gray and his dog

"Oh please, Mom! ... I've already handled him and now the mother won't take him back."

"Okay, now it's my turn. ... Bob want the cracker ... Bob want the cracker ... "

"Hey! What's going on here? ... We're losing the visual!"

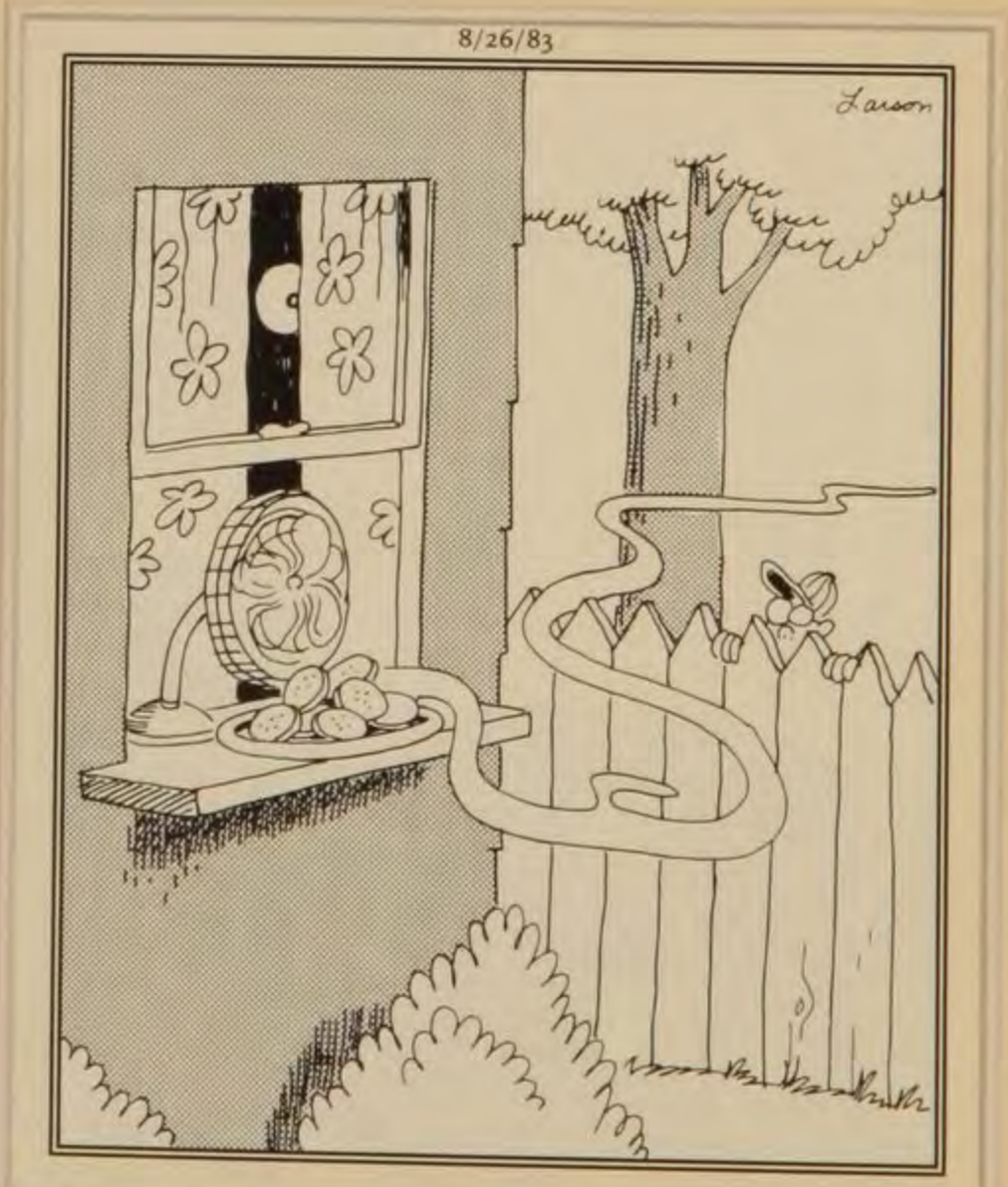
August 1983



"Good heavens, Charles! You're at it again! ... And with my fresh sponge cake, I see!"

"Wow! Well, what happened next, Gramps— *after* you found the cheese sitting on the little block of wood?"

"Oh no! They're telling the story of 'The Hooked Hand'! ... I'll *never* get to sleep tonight!"



August 1983

8/27/83

8/29/83

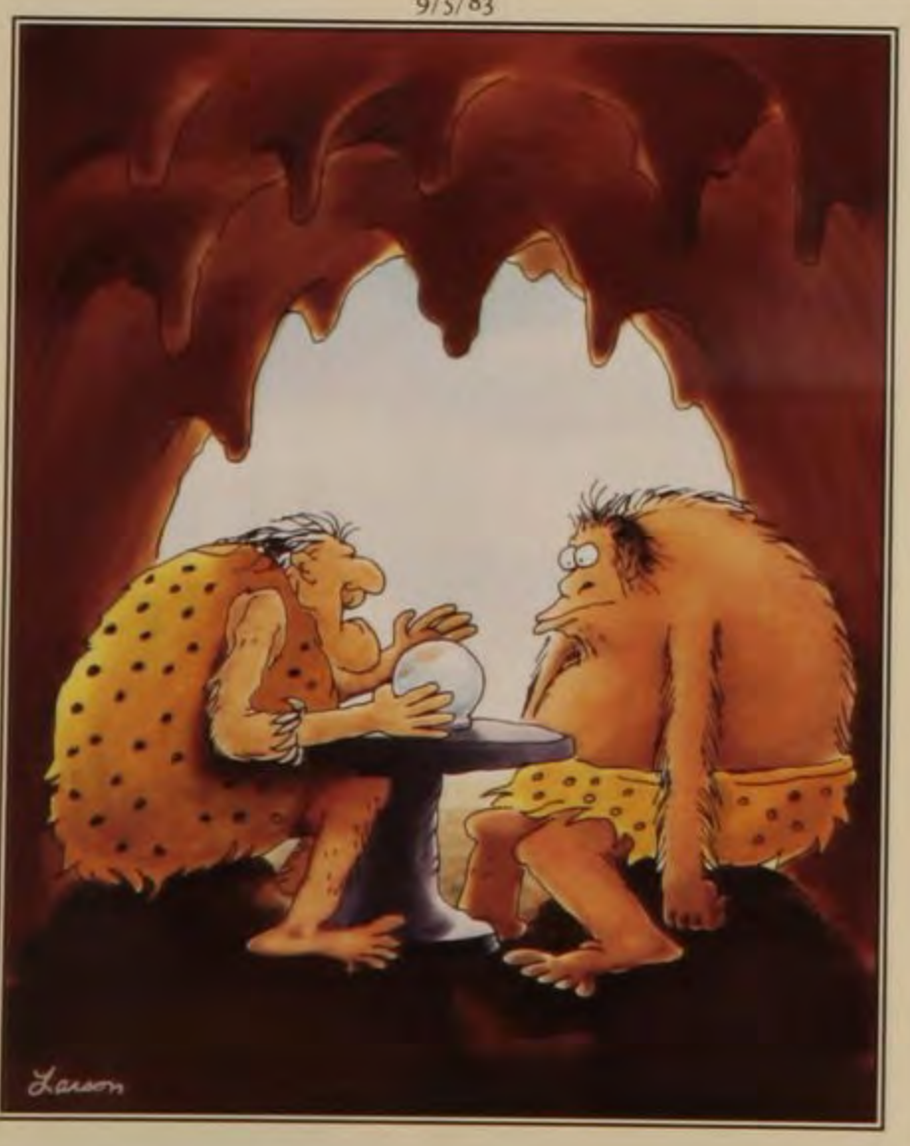
8/30/83

8/31/83

"Well, here comes Mr. Hunter and Gatherer with another useless treasure."

September 1983

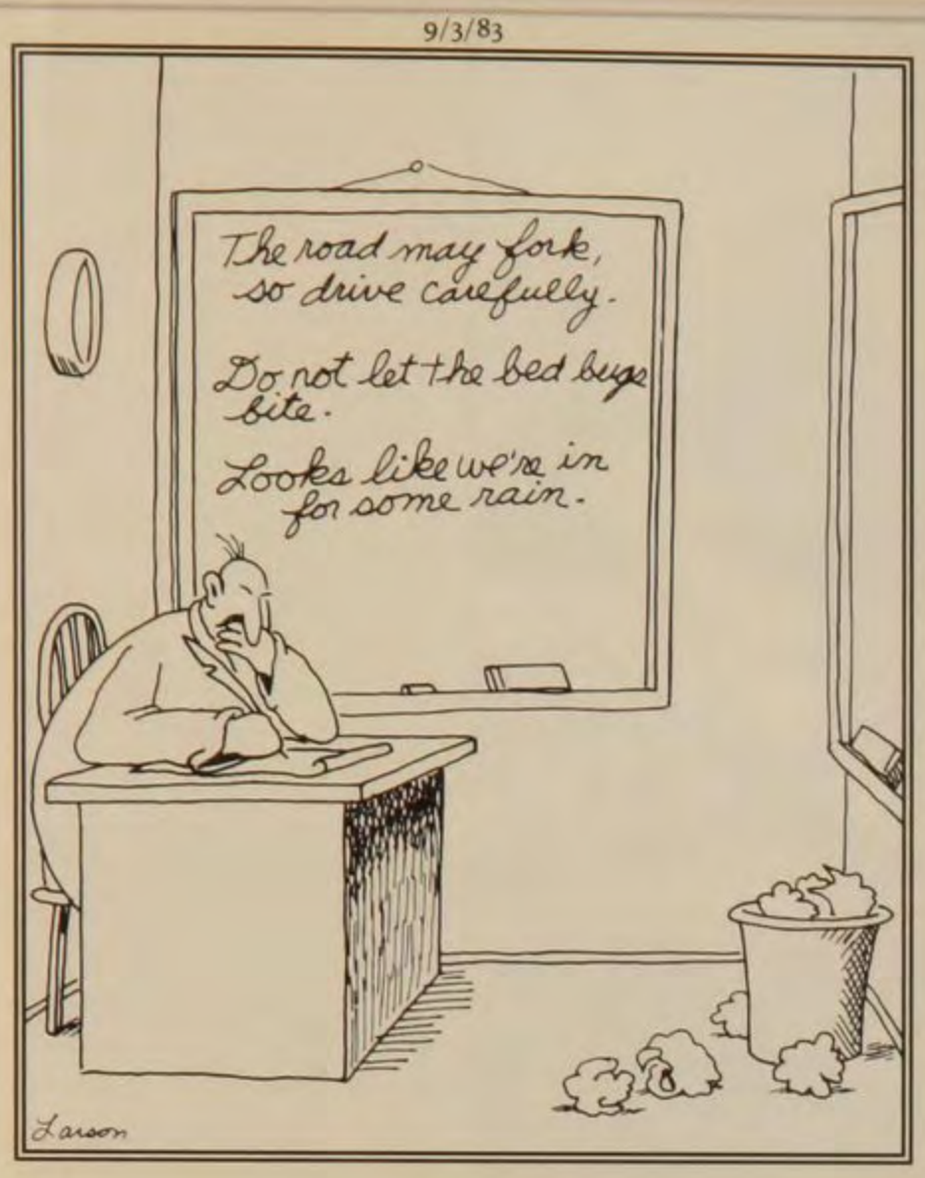
"I've heard all kinds of sounds from these things, but 'yabba dabba doo' was a new one to me."



"I see your little, petrified skull ... labeled and resting on a shelf somewhere."

"Well, we're lost ... and it's probably just a matter of time before someone decides to shoot us."

September 1983



Confucius at the office

"Boy, there's sure a lot of sharks around here, aren't there? ... Circling and circling. ... THERE GOES ANOTHER ONE! ... Killers of the sea ... yes siree ..."

"Okay, here we go again ... one ... two ..."

"There! Quick, Larry! Look! ... Was I kidding? ... That sucker's longer than the boat!"

9/8/83

"Oo! Goldfish, everyone! Goldfish!"

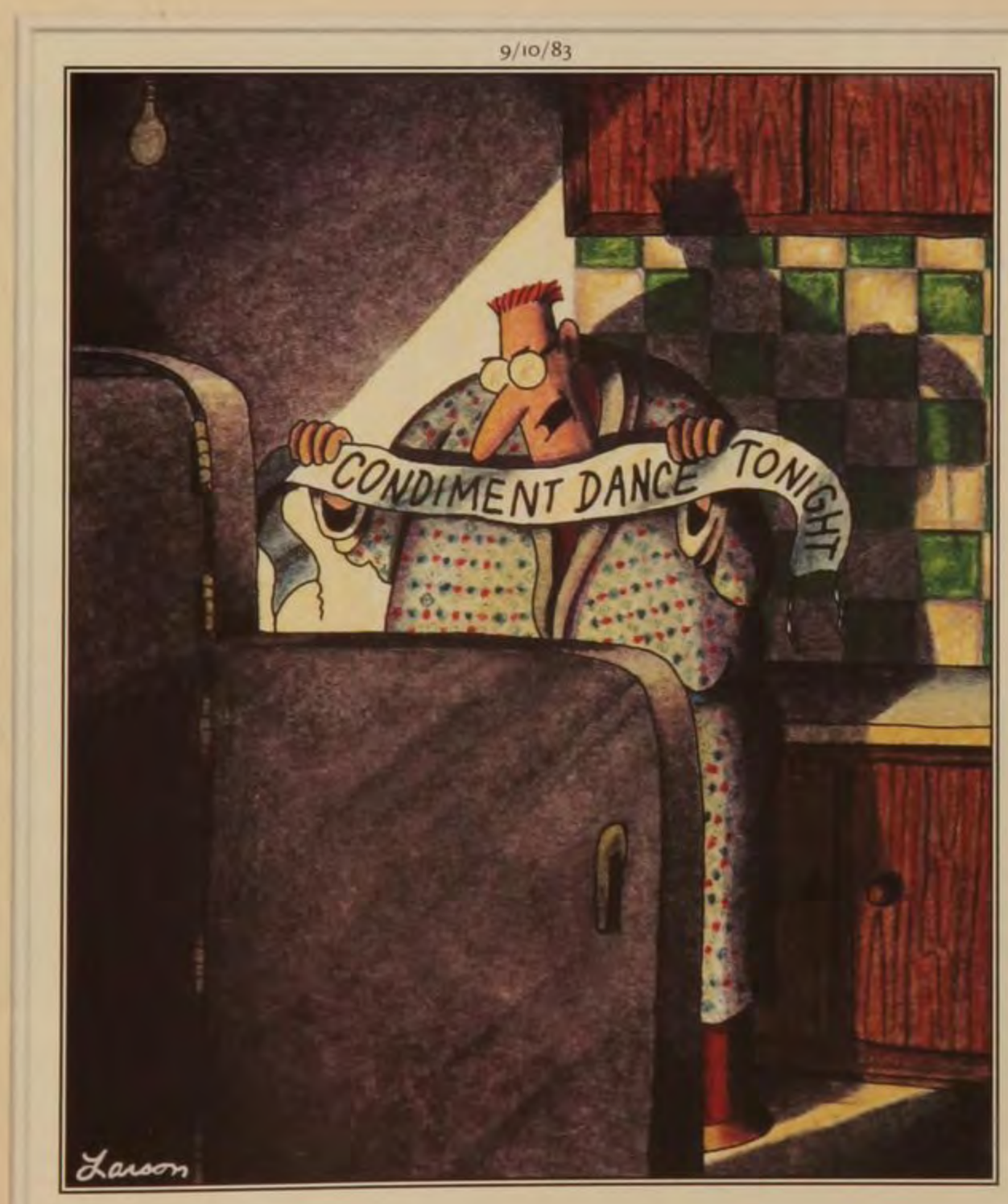
9/12/83

9/13/83

September 1983

"Andrew! Fix Edgar's head! ... It's not facing the camera!"

"I don't like this. ... The carnivores have been boozing it up at the punchbowl all night—drinking, looking around, drinking, looking around ..."



"I'll just take *this*, thank you! ... And knock off that music!"

September 1983

9/17/83

"Dang! This can't be right. ... I can *hear* the stage, but I can't see a blamed thing!"

9/24/83

9/19/83

9/22/83

The frogs at home

September 1983

"Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock ..."

"Say ... *you're* not Bob! ... You look like him, but you're certainly not him!"

"Yes, with the amazing new 'knife,' you only have to wear the *skin* of those dead animals."

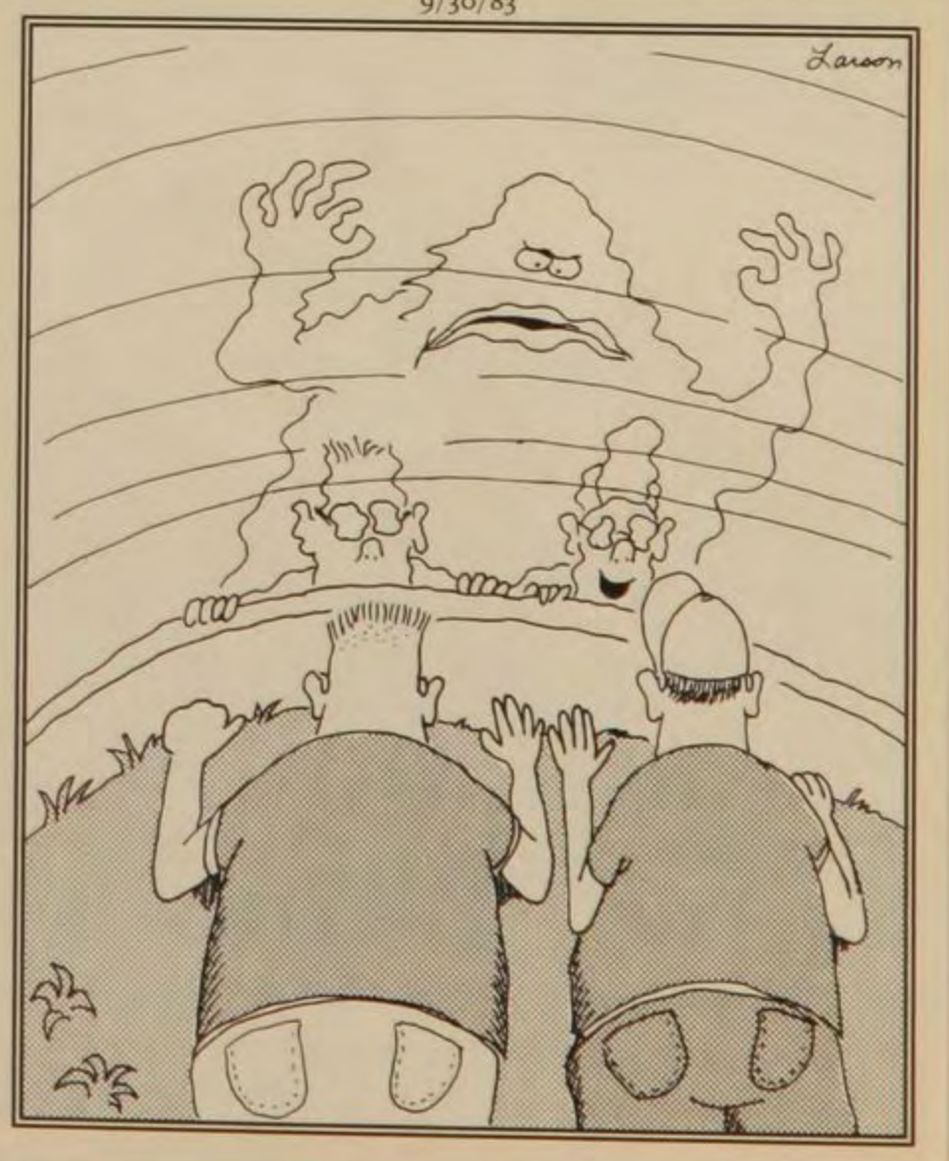
Darrell suspected someone had once again slipped him a trick spoon with the concave side reversed.

September 1983

"So, Foster! That's how you want it, huh? ...
Then take THIS!"

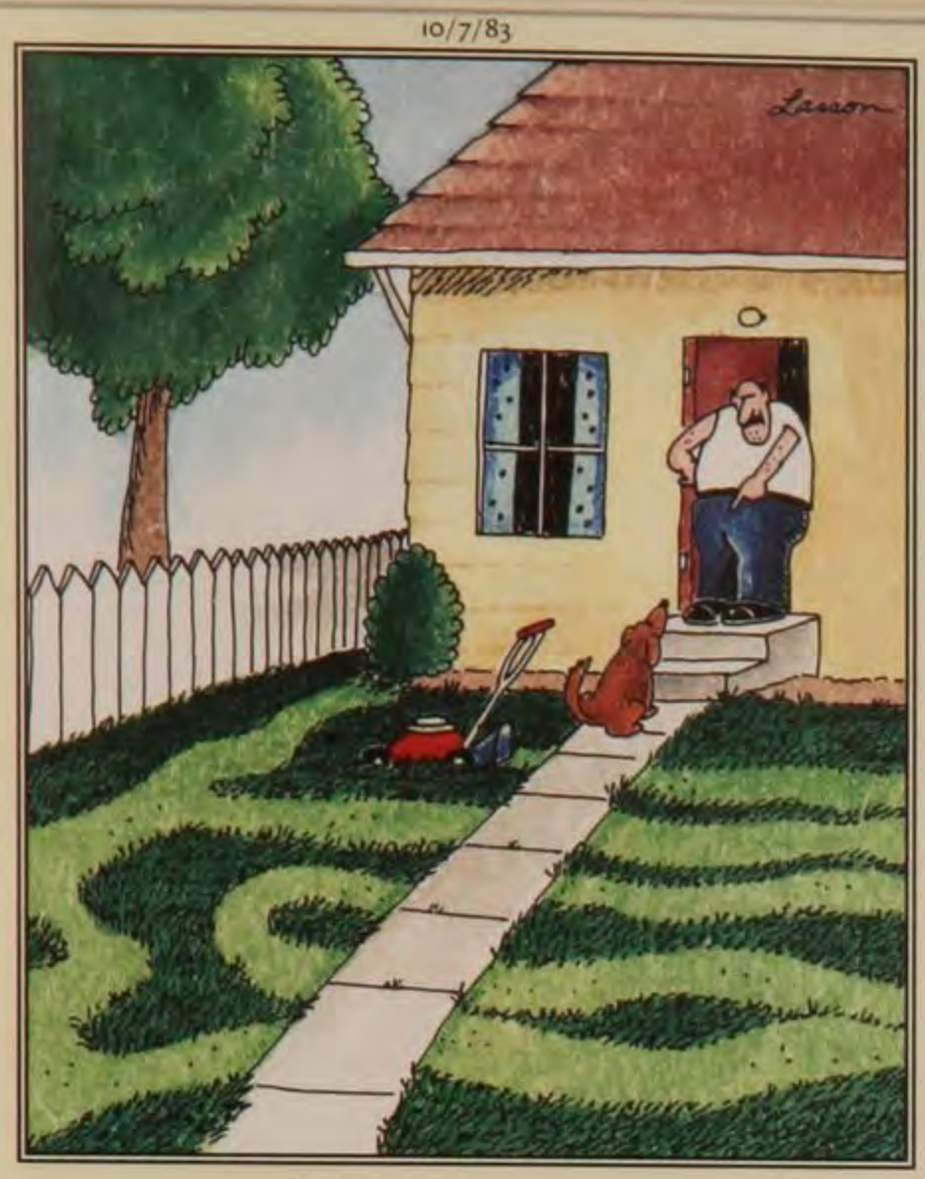
With Roger out of the way, it was Sidney's
big chance.

Beware the elephant in tall grass.



"*My* reflection? Look at *yours*, Randy. ...
You look like some big, fat swamp thing."

October 1983



"You call that mowin' the lawn? ... Bad dog! ... No biscuit! ... Bad dog!"

Charles wanders into a herd of dirt buffaloes.

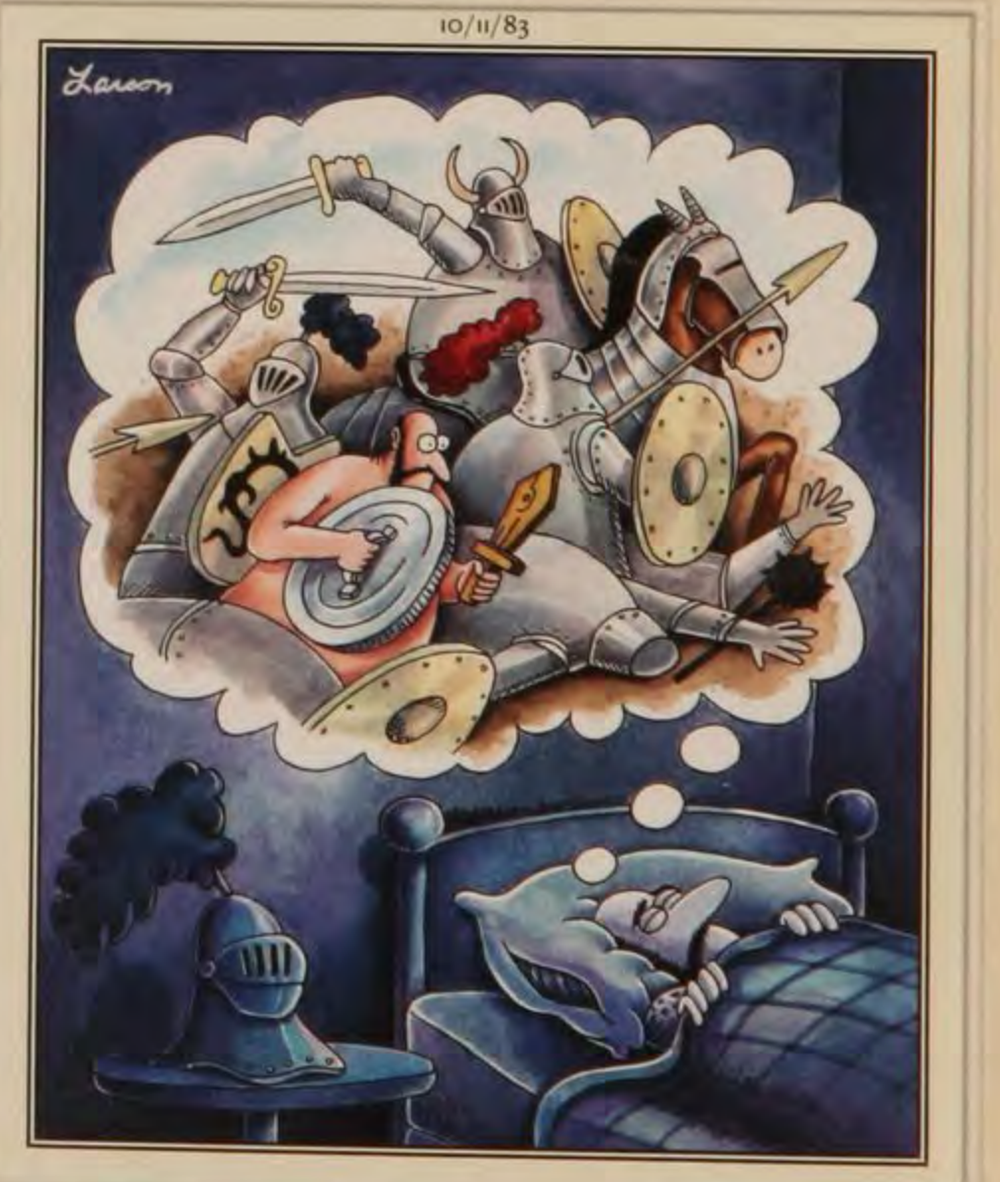
"My turn? ... Well, I'm originally from the shores of the upper Nile and ... saaaaaaay ... did anyone ever tell you your pupils are *round*?"

October 1983

"I presume you're Dr. Livingstone. ... I mean ... presumably, you're Dr. Livingstone. ... No wait. ... Dang! I've screwed it up!"

Primitive fandango

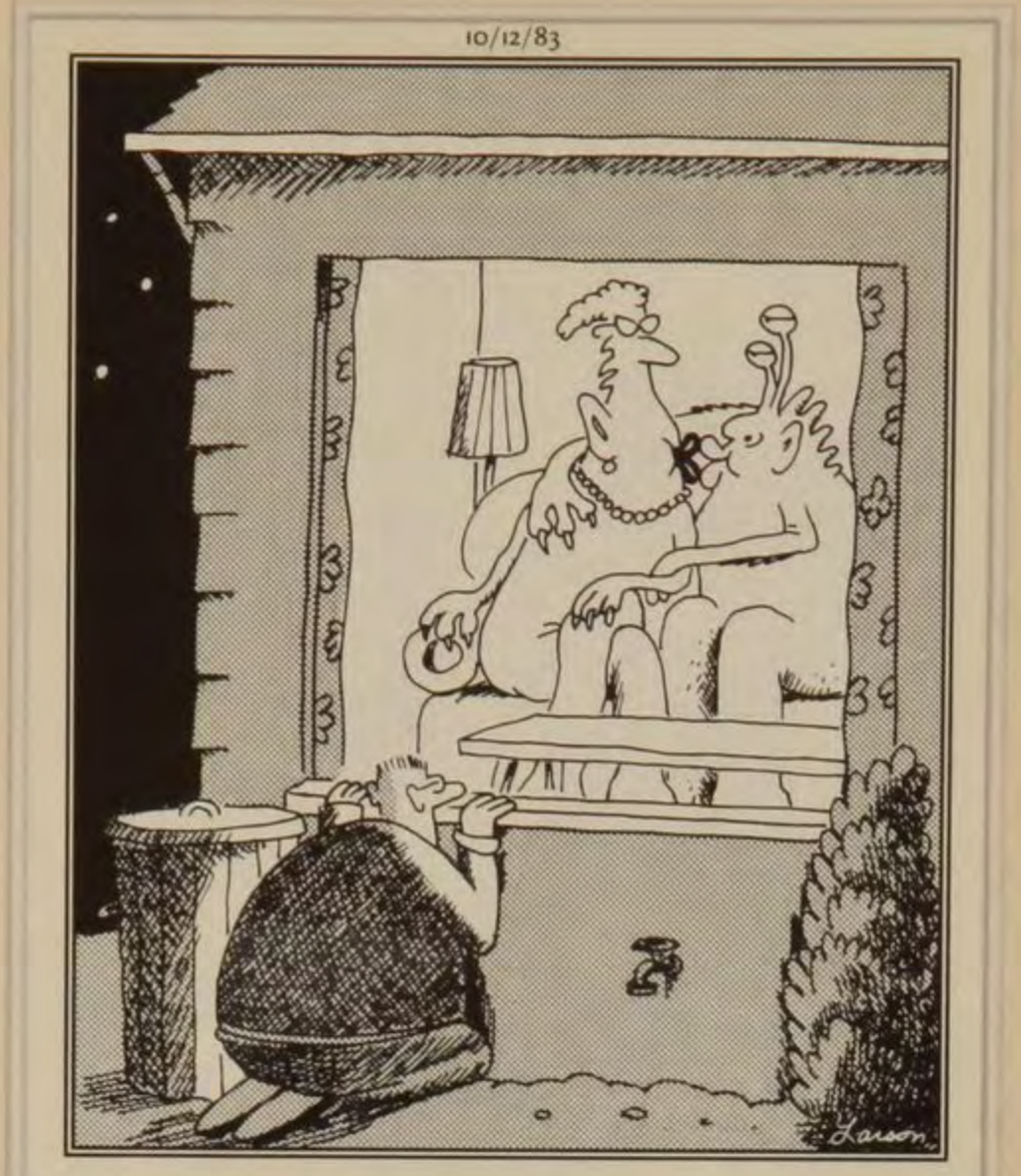
"Look out, Larry! ... That retriever has finally found you!"



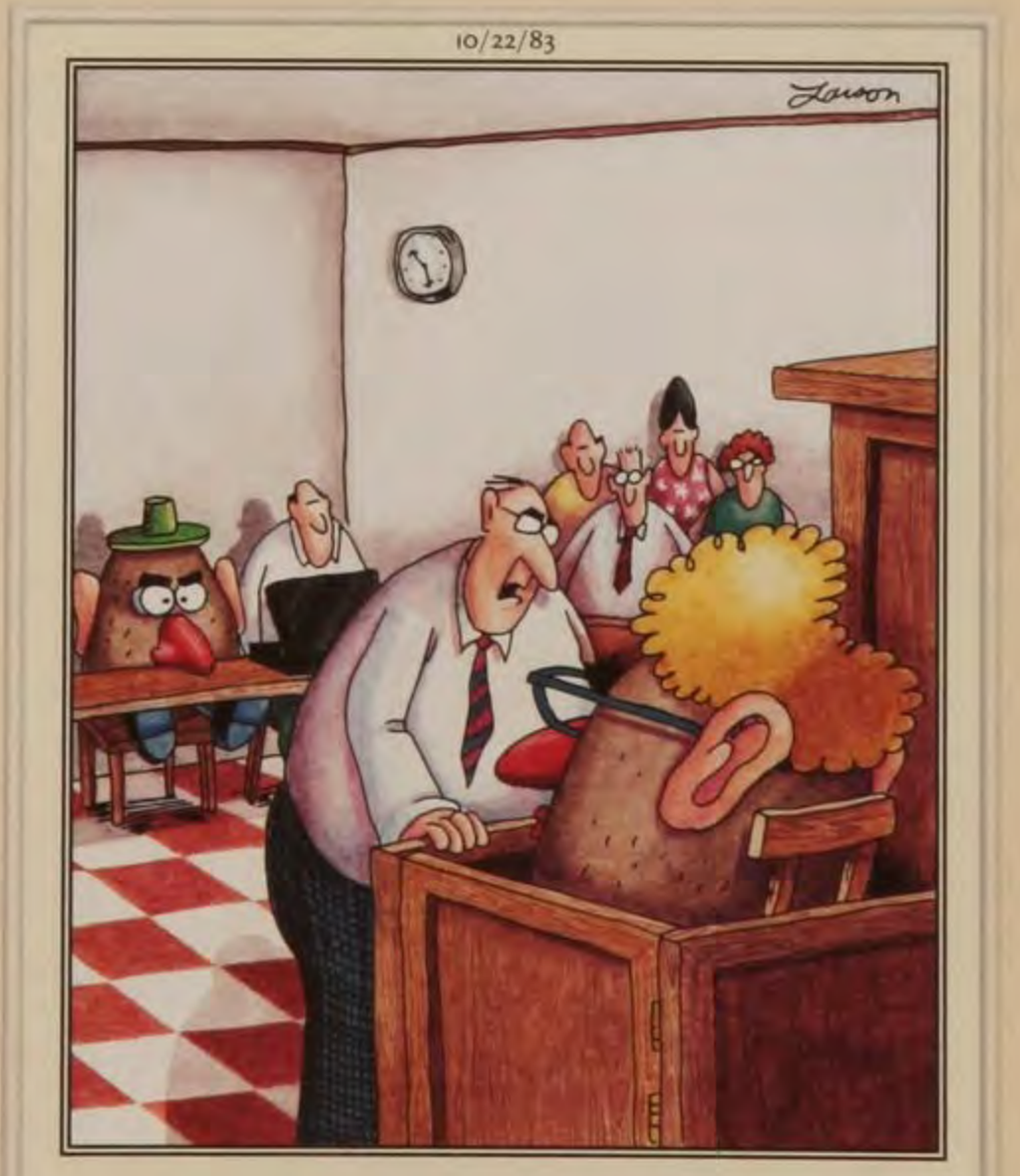
Common medieval nightmare

October 1983

"Saaaaay. ... I think I smell *perfume!* ... You haven't been over at the Leopard Woman's, have you?"



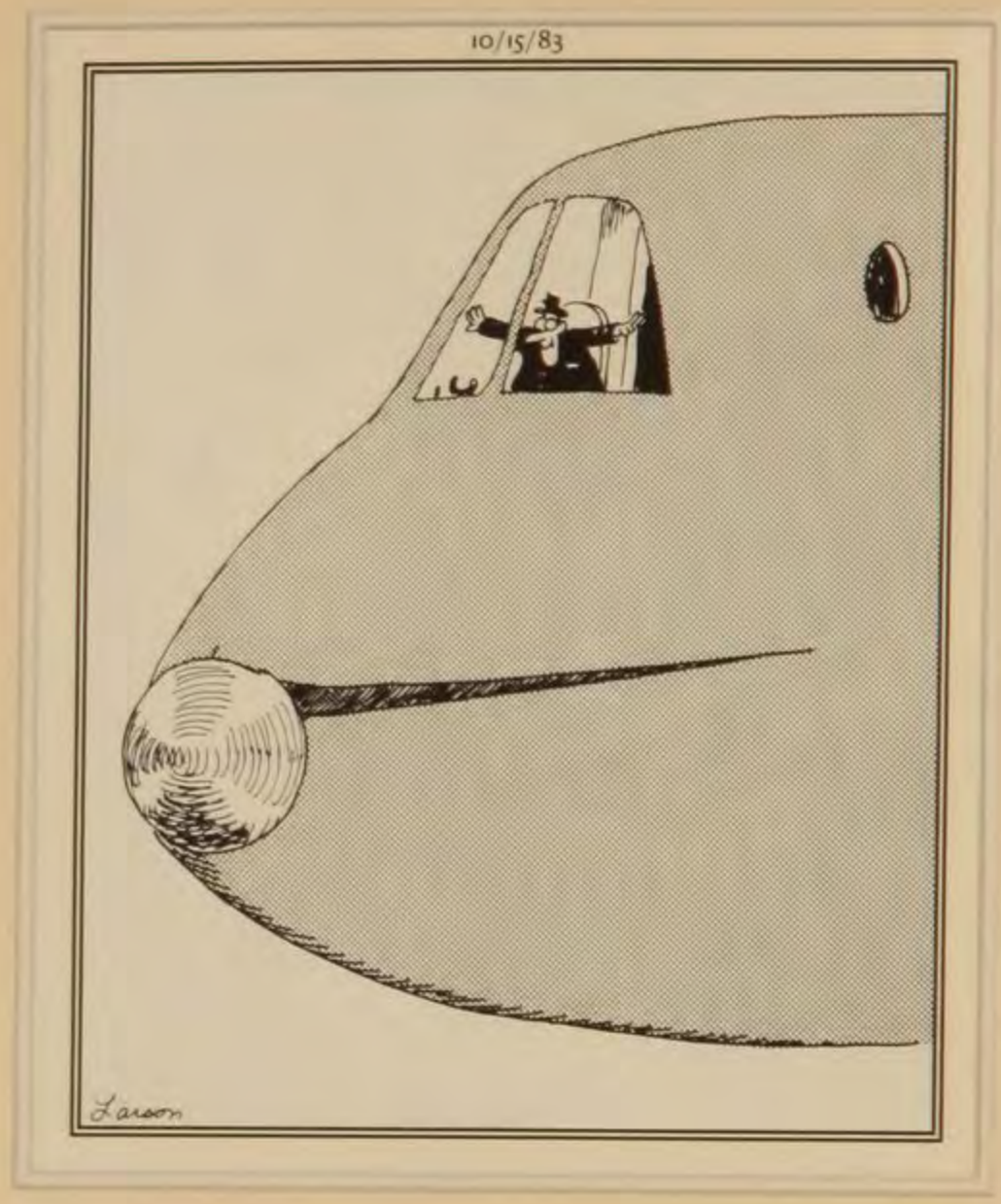
Clayton frequently watched the monsters, until the night he knocked over the garbage can and was subsequently eaten.



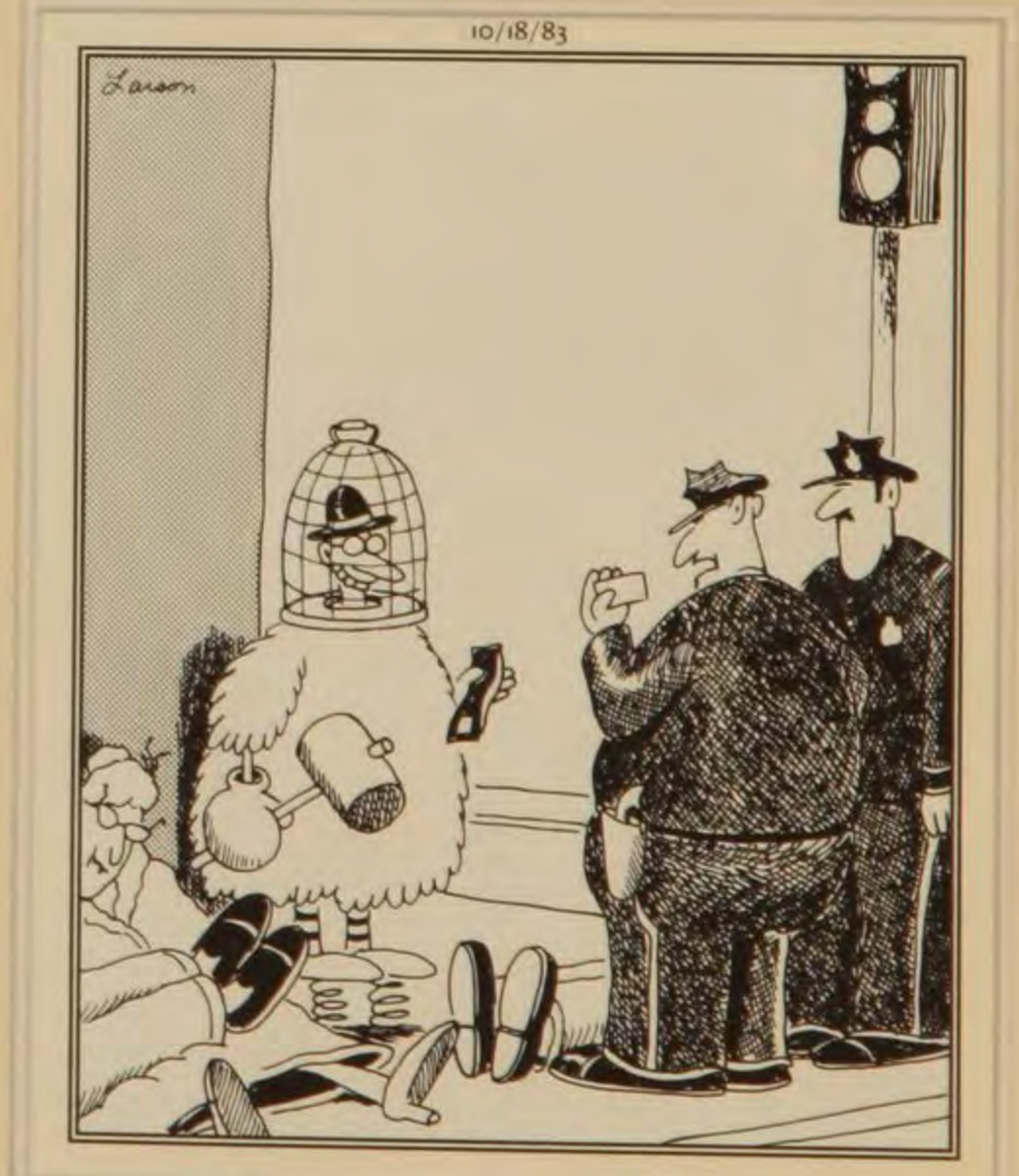
"So now tell the court, if you will, Mrs. Potato Head, exactly what transpired on the night your husband chased you with the Veg-o-matic."

October 1983

"Well, Captain Grunfield, it says here you were expelled from the belly of a large squid after ... ha ... after your boat ... ha ha ... after ... ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! ..."



"Dang! ... Who ate the middle out of the daddy longlegs?"



"Well, I'll be darned. ... I guess he does have a license to do that."

October 1983

10/19/83

10/20/83

"Kemosabe! ... The music's starting!
The music's starting!"

10/21/83

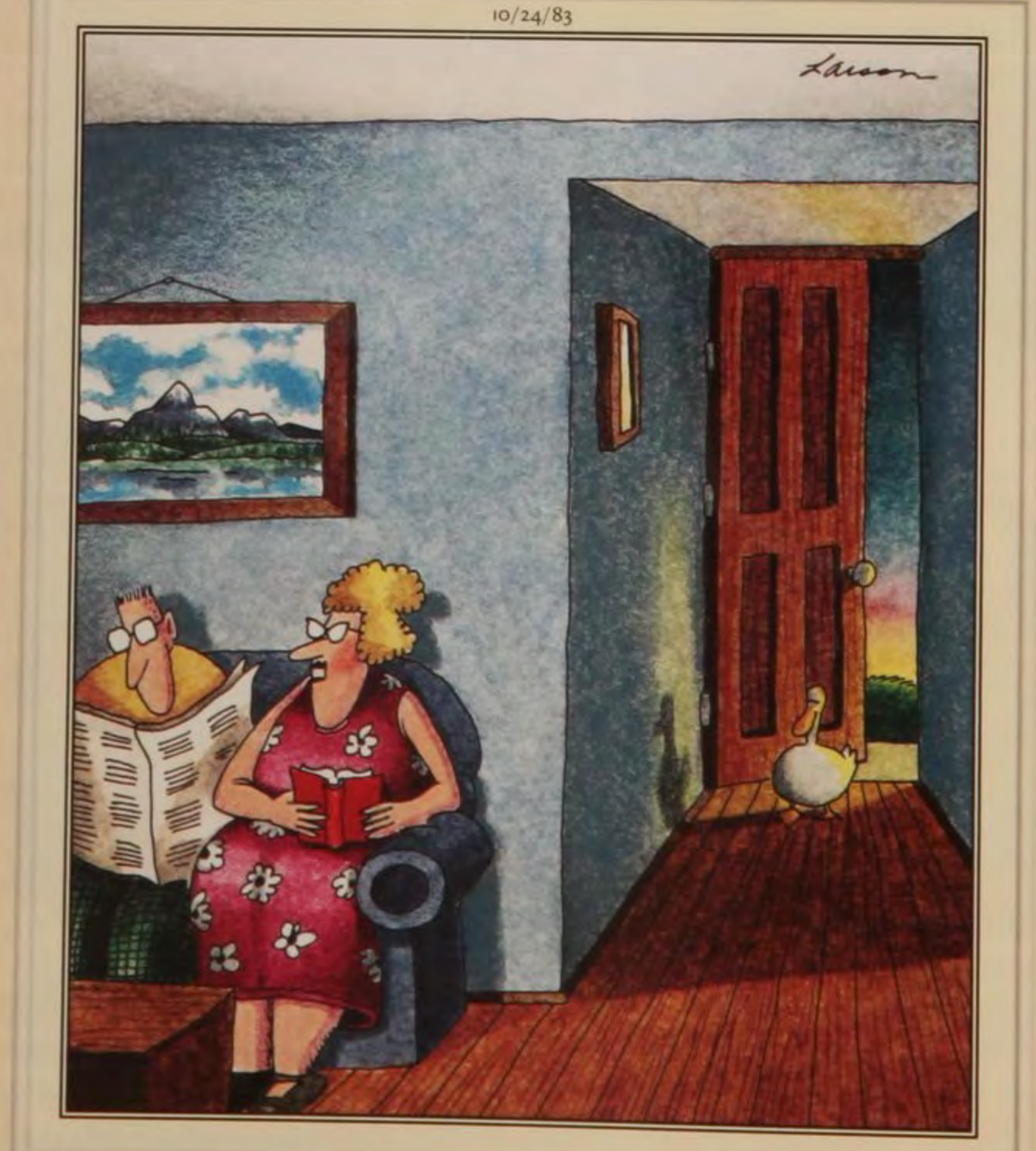
"So then, when the bank doors open, we ...
Louie! You jerk! ... Your hat brim is up!"

10/26/83

Early physics

October 1983

"FLETCHER, YOU FOOL! ...
THE GATE! THE GATE!"



"Here he comes, Earl. ... Remember, be gentle but firm ... we are absolutely, positively, NOT driving him south this winter."

October 1983

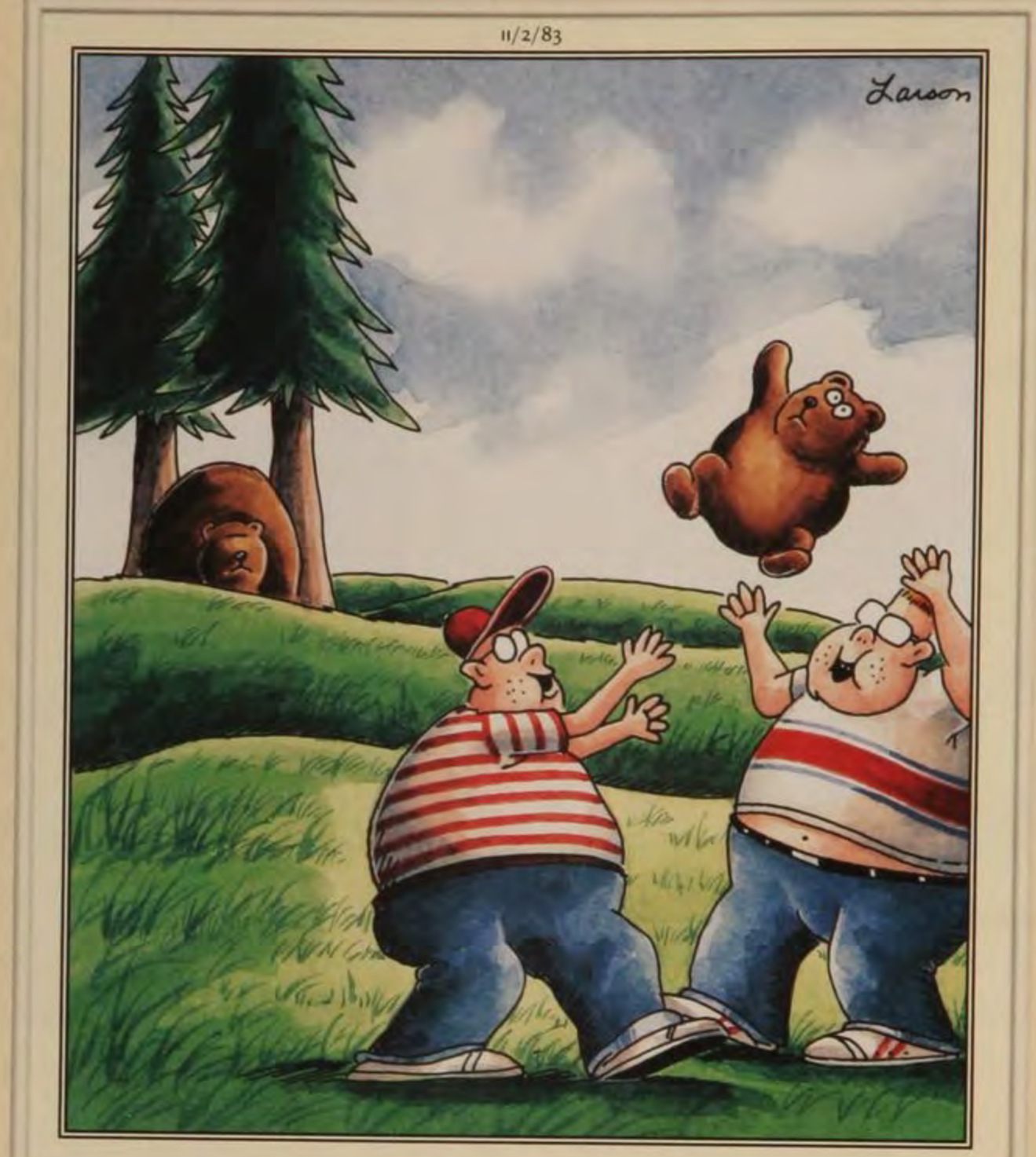
10/31/83

10/28/83

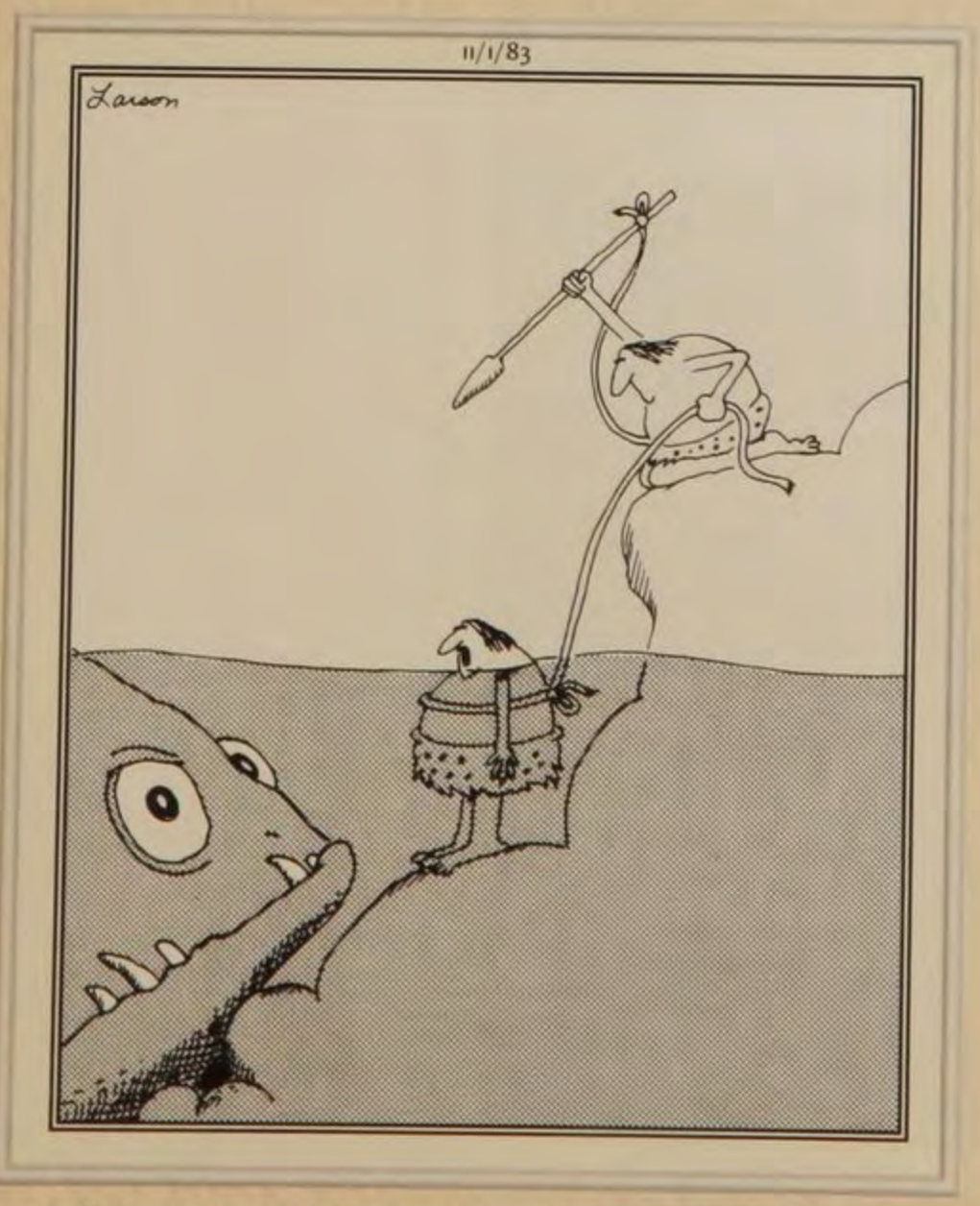
10/29/83

Frances loved her little pets and dressed them differently every day.

November 1983



And no one ever heard from the
Anderson brothers again.

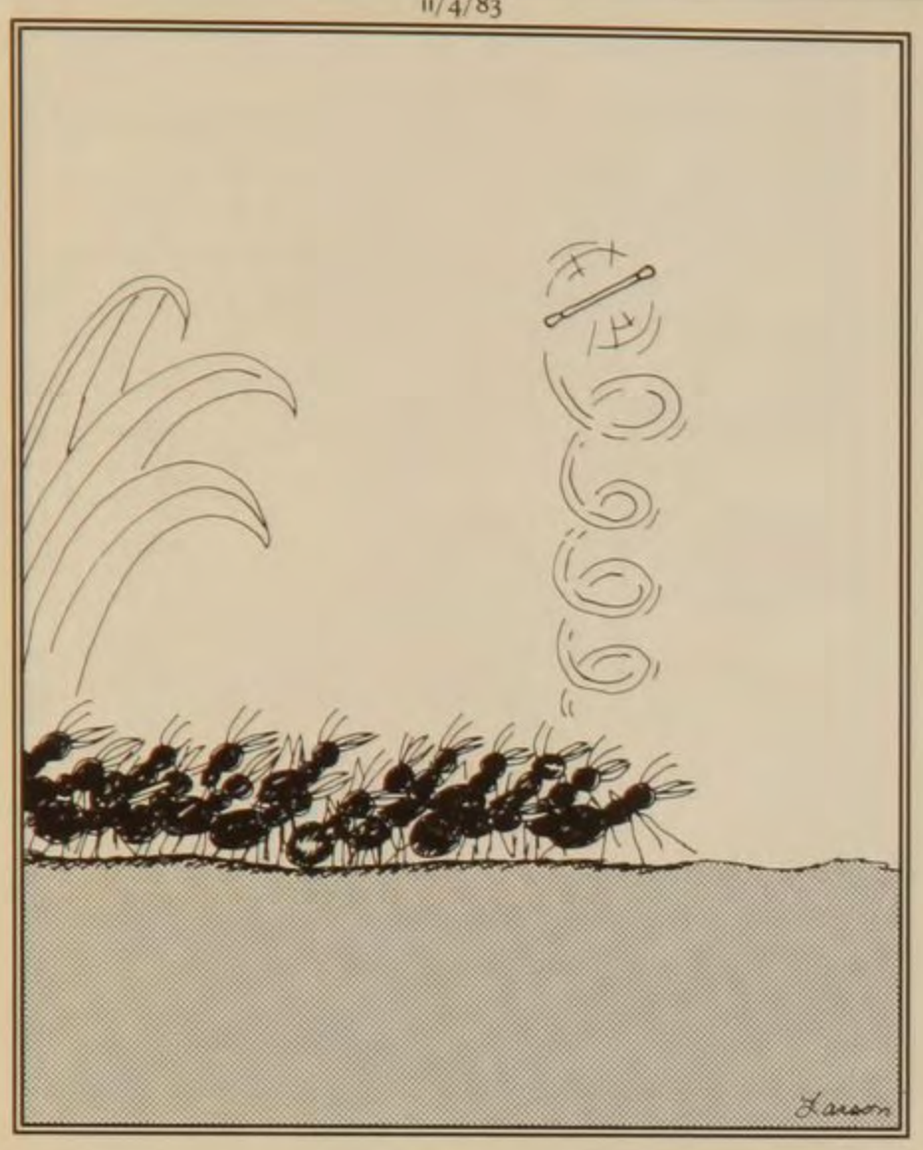


"Now, Grog! Throw! ... Throoooooow! ...
Throw throw throw throw throw throw! ..."

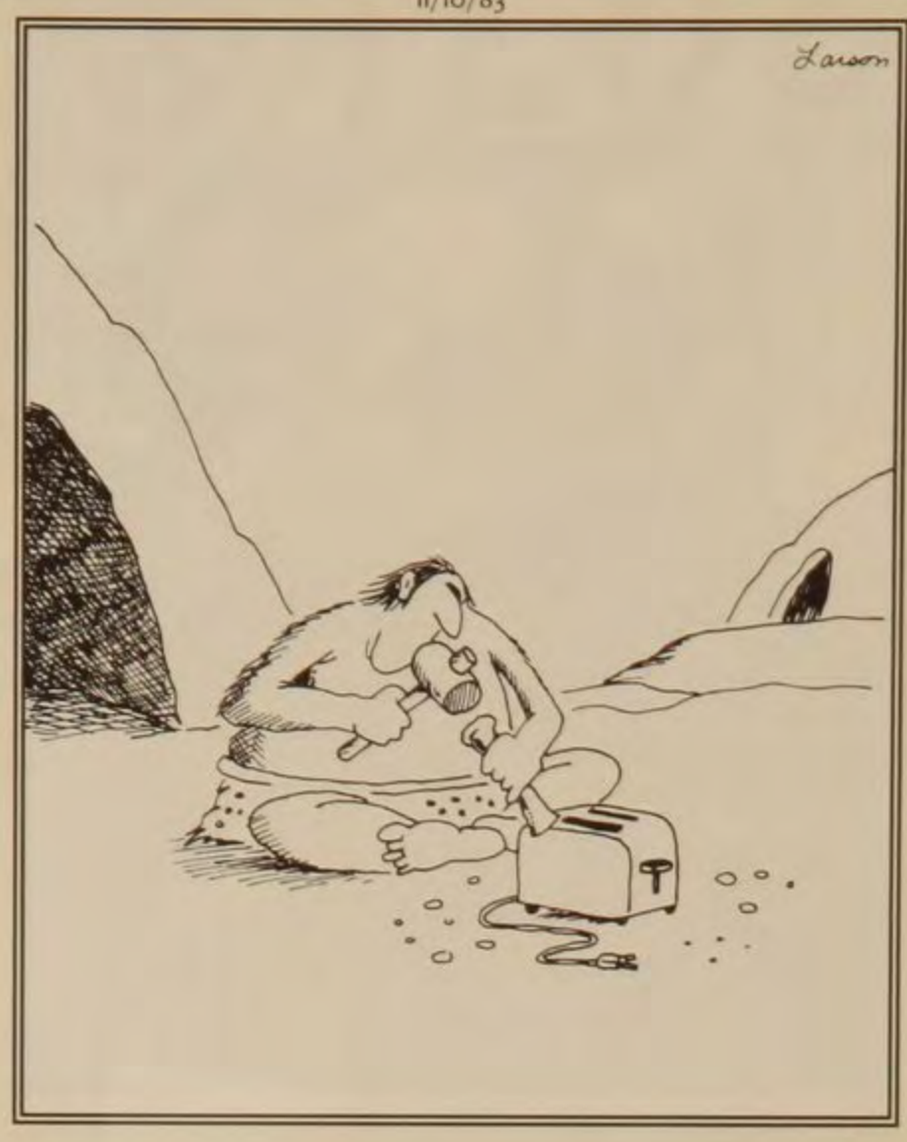
"So then Sheila says to Betty that Arnold
told her what Harry was up to, but Betty
told me she already heard it from
Blanche, don't you know ..."

November 1983

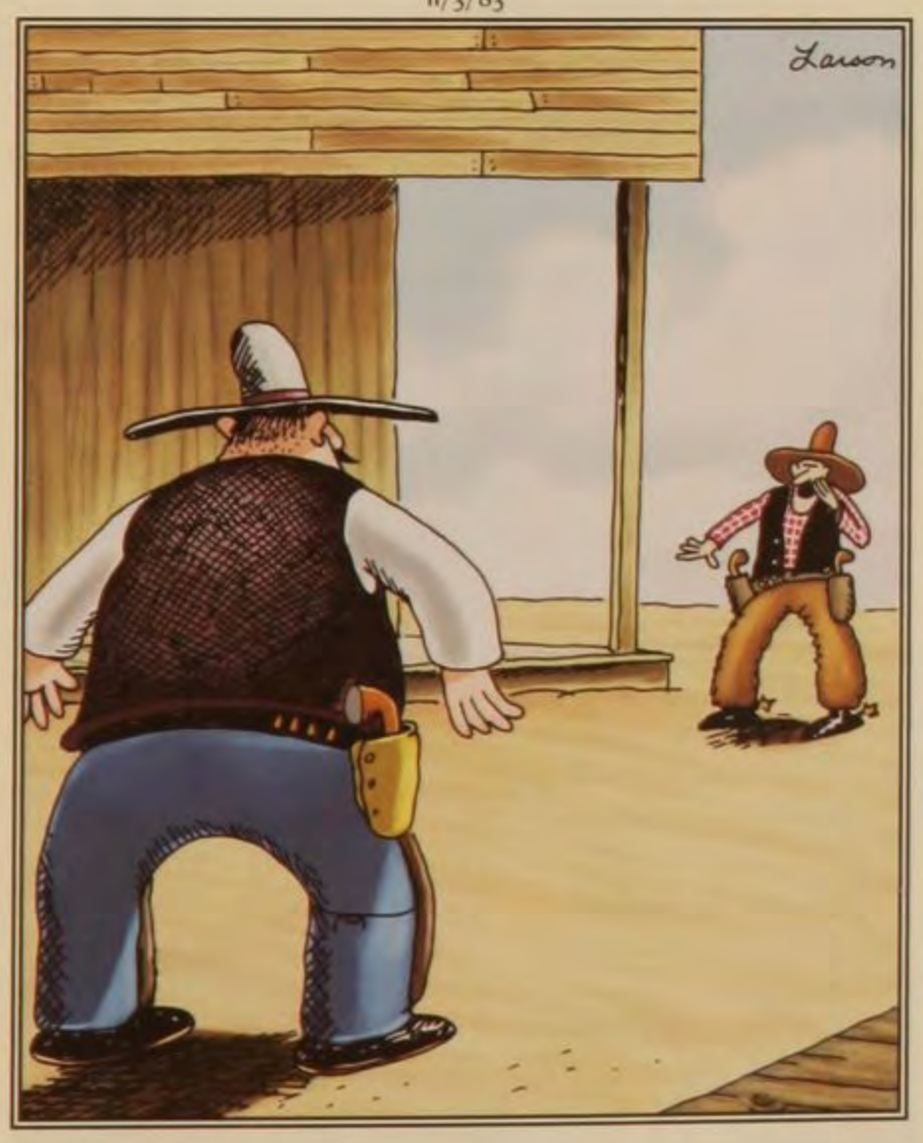
11/4/83



11/10/83



11/3/83

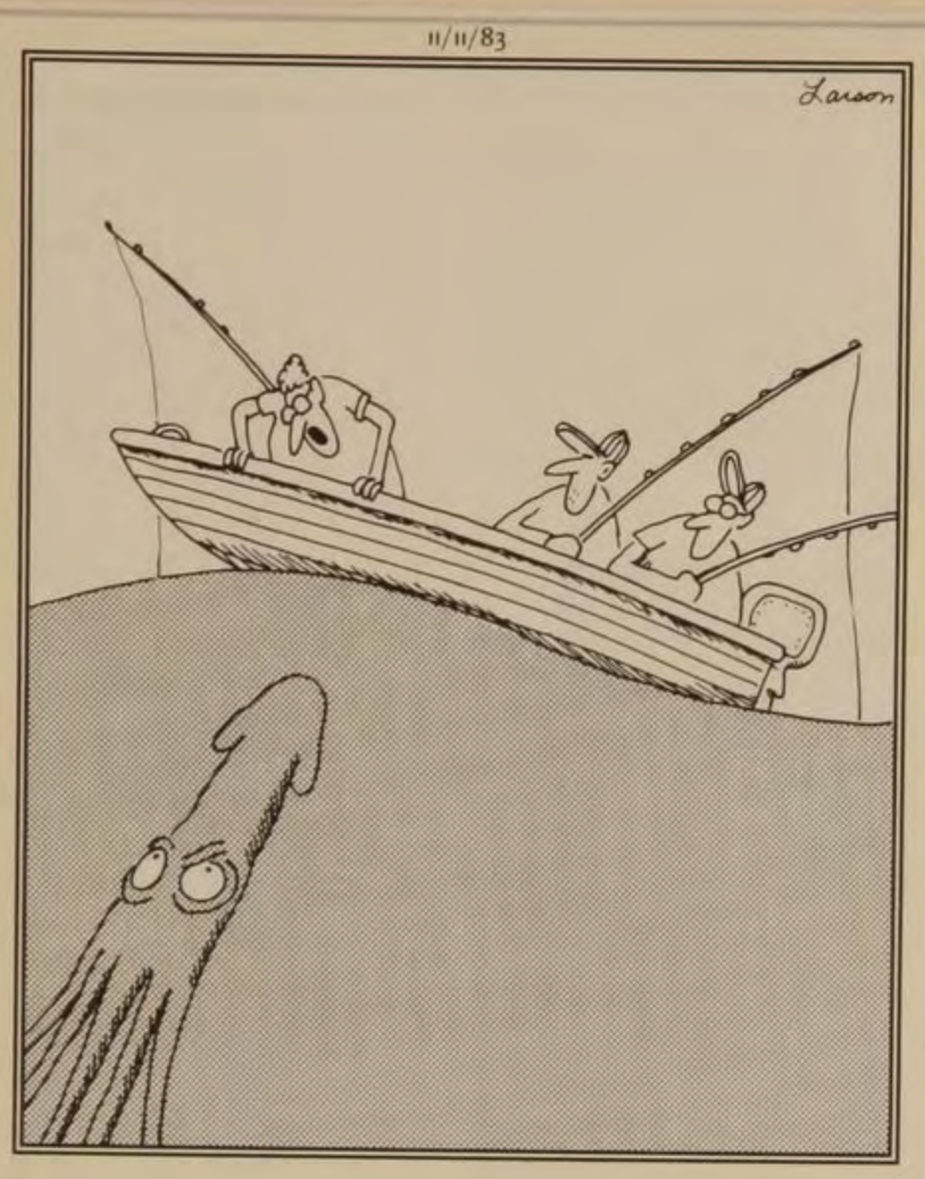


"SHOE'S UNTIED!"

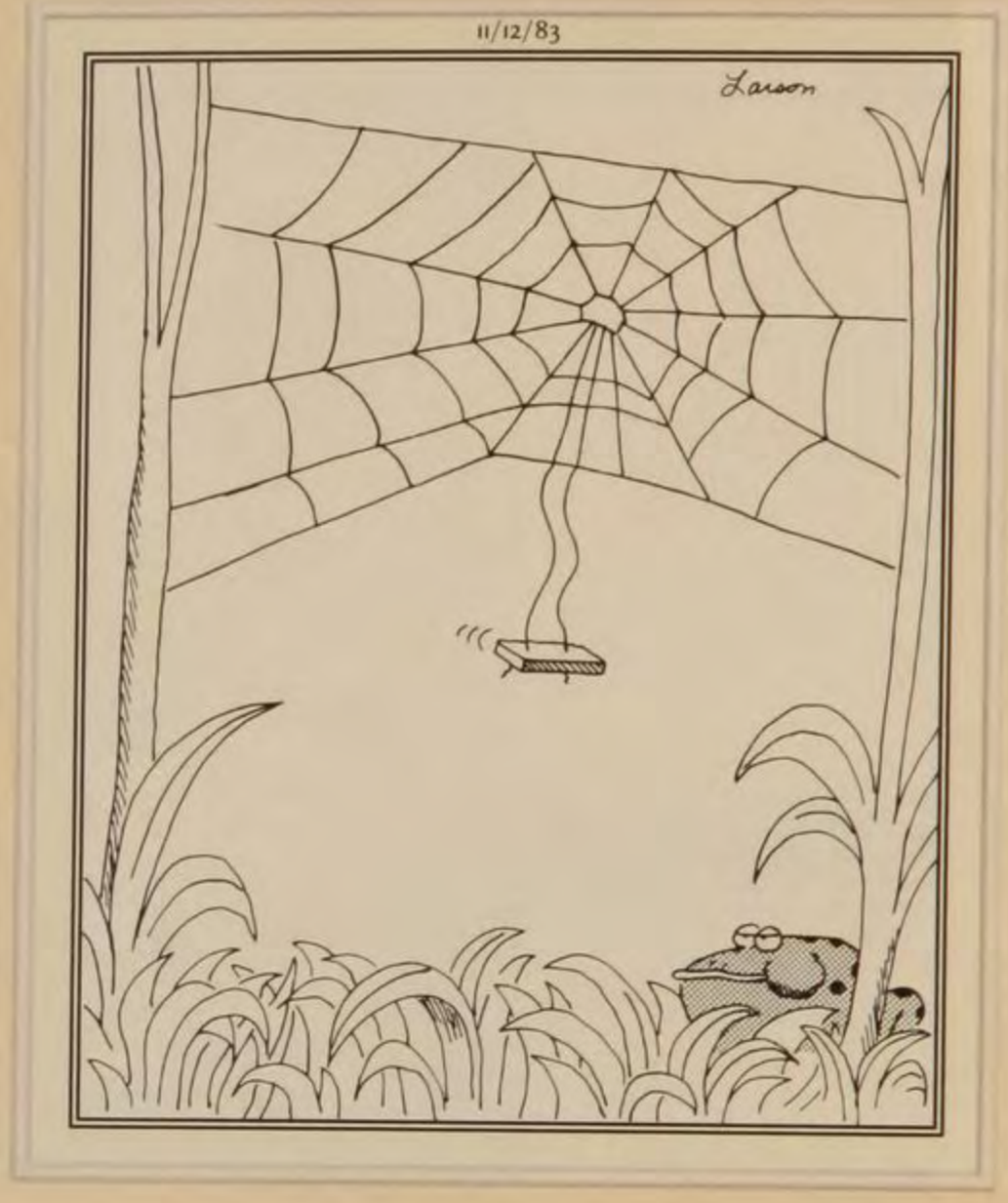
11/7/83

"C'mon, c'mon, buddy! The heart! Hand over the heart! ... And you with the brains! ... Let's have 'em!"

November 1983



"Look out, everyone! ... We're being attacked by a giant sq ... well, no ... I'd say medium squid!"



"Hey! You'll get a kick out of this, Bill and Ruth! ... Watch what Lola here does with her new squeeze doll!"

"Well, Bobby, it's not like you haven't been warned. ... *No roughhousing under the hornets' nest!*"

November 1983

11/14/83

Museums of the future

11/15/83

"Somebody better run fetch the sheriff."

11/17/83

"If we pull this off, we'll eat like kings."

11/18/83

"Curses! ... How long does it take Igor to go out and bring back a simple little brain, anyway?"

November 1983

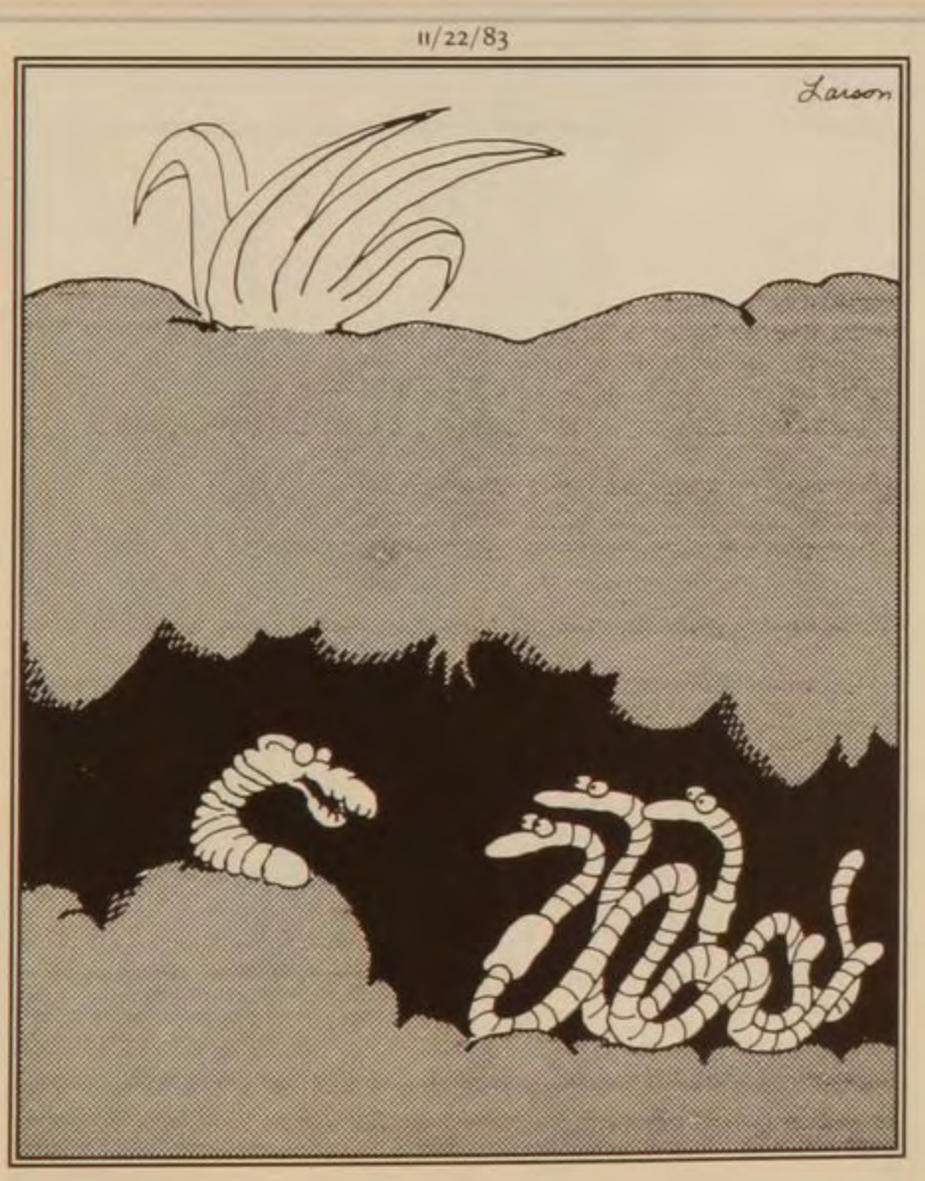
"Okay, everyone, dig in ... and you kids watch for stingers."

At the head of the train, Russell was first to notice the slide was out.

"Yes, they're all fools, gentlemen ... but the question remains, 'What *kind* of fools are they?'"

November 1983

Early microscope



"So, there we were! ... Locked into this life and death tug-o'-war! ... Your grandma had one end of me, the bird had the other, but everyone went away satisfied."

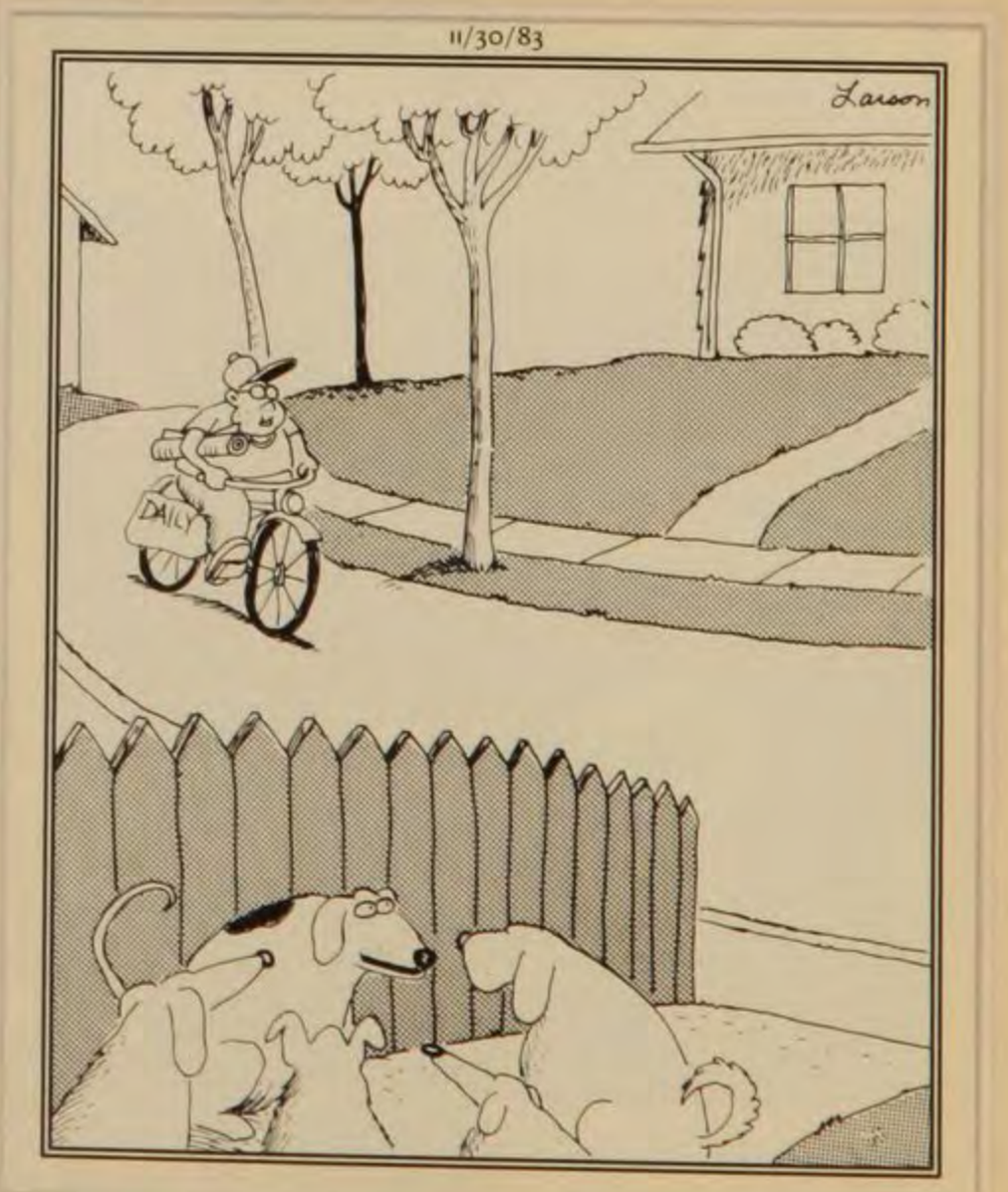
"My word! ... That one came just too close for comfort, if you ask me."

November 1983

Grog hesitated, not wanting to face his parents.

Tarzan of the Jungle, Nanook of the North, and Warren of the Wasteland

"Blast! This cinches it! ... If we ever find it again, I'm gonna bolt the sucker on!"



"Okay, this time Rex and Zeke will be the wolves, Fifi and Muffin will be the coyotes, and ... Listen! ... Here comes the deer!"

December 1983

12/1/83

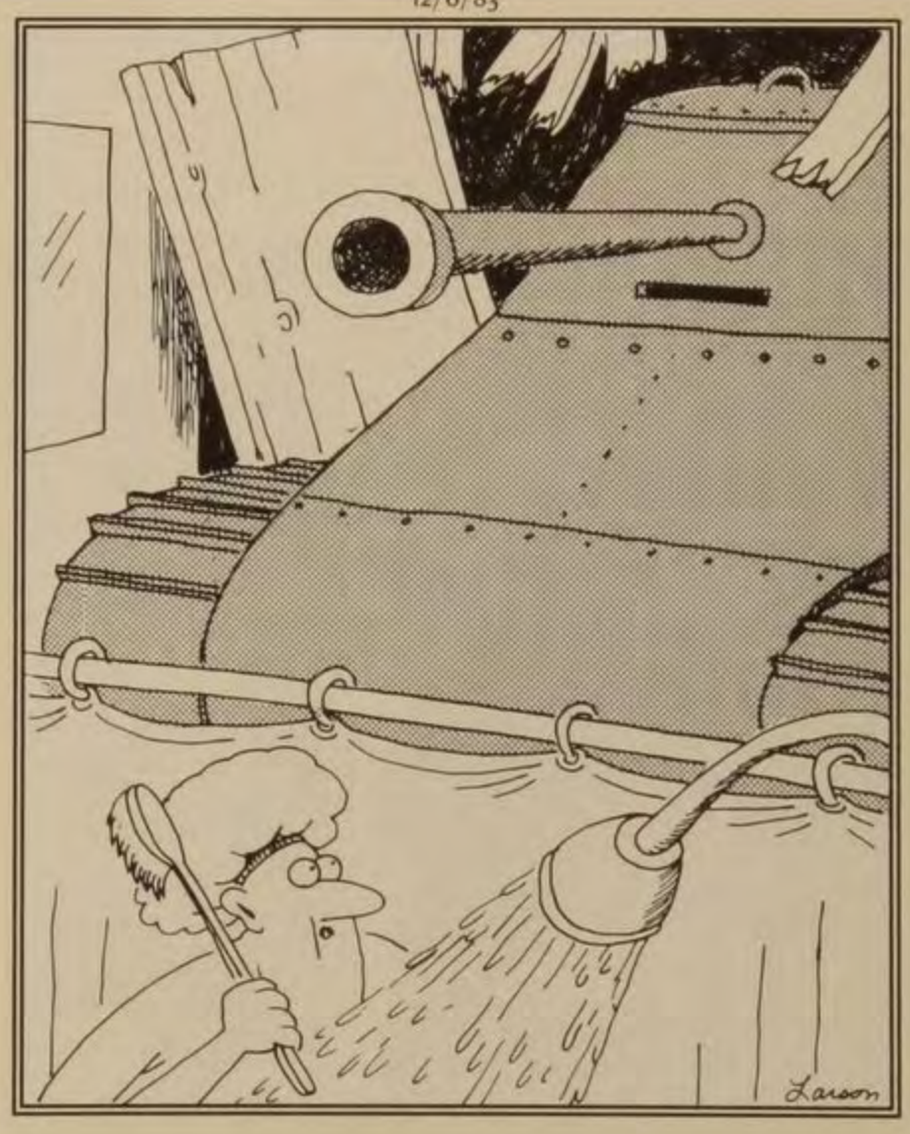
"I've had it, Doc! I've come all the way from Alabama with this danged thing on my knee!"

12/2/83

12/3/83

Last of the Mohicans

12/6/83



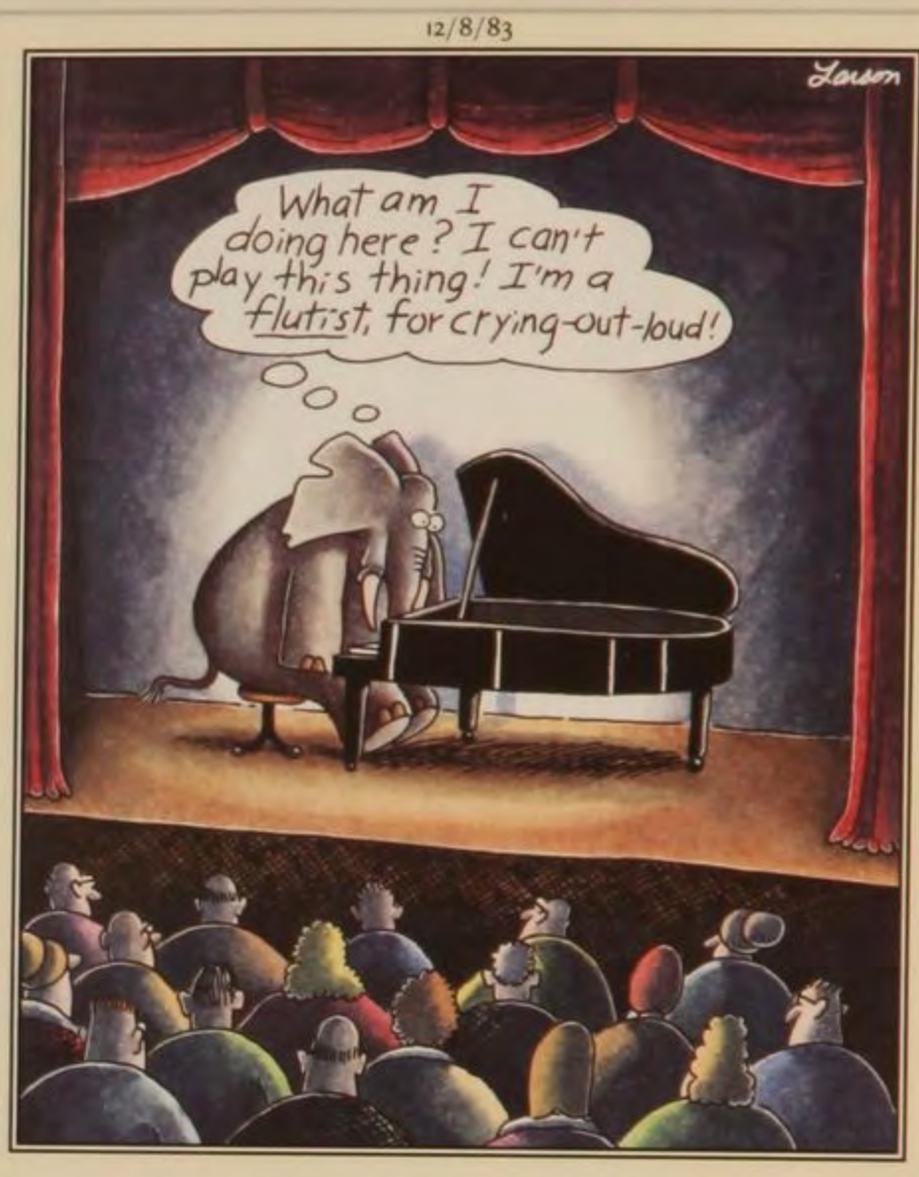
Psycho III

December 1983

12/7/83

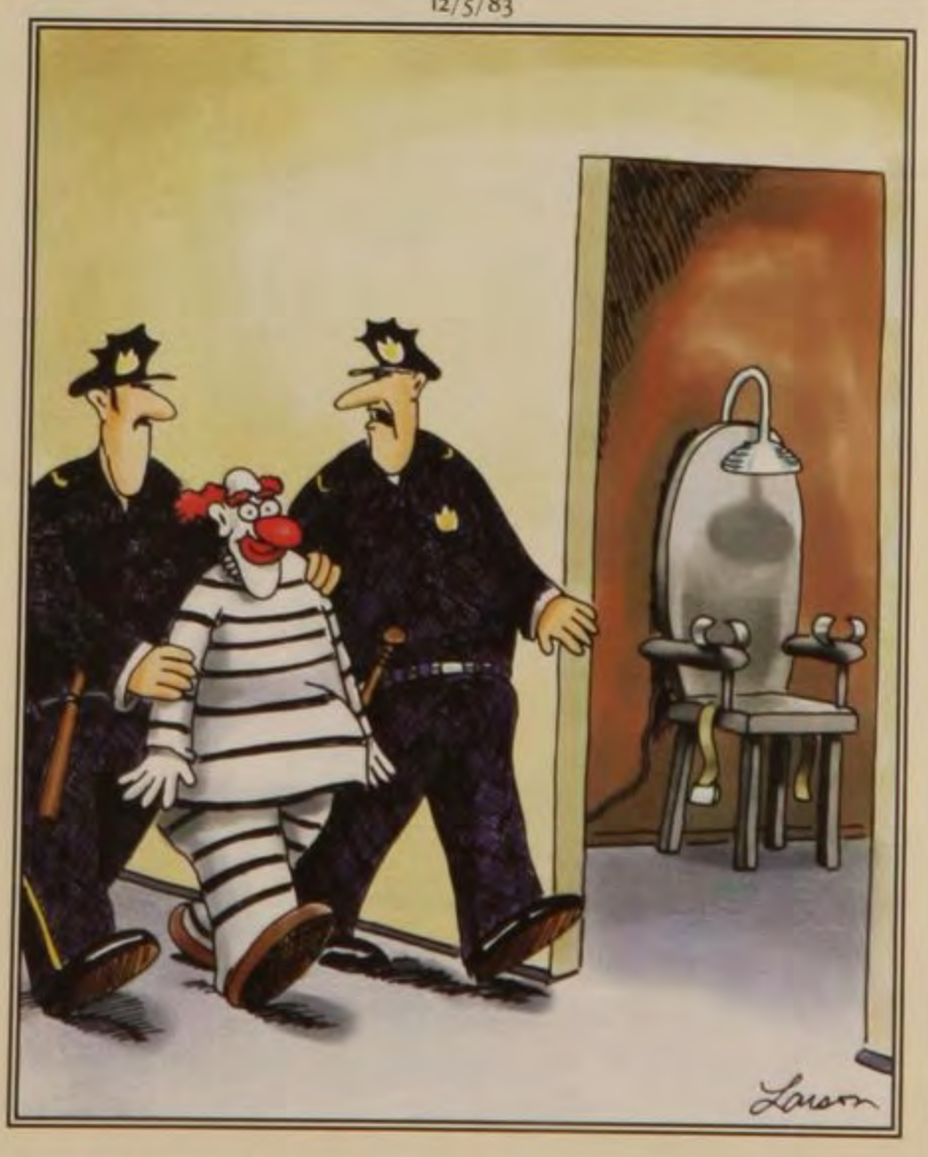
Games you can play with your cat.

12/8/83



The elephant's nightmare

12/5/83



"I don't think I'll be able to tell the kids about this one."

12/9/83

"Hey! You! ... Yeah, that's right! I'm talkin' to YOU!"

December 1983

12/10/83

12/12/83

12/14/83

December 1983

"Hold it right there, young man! ... Are you feeding the squid under the table again?"

"The first two gave me trouble, but not that little bear. ... I bagged him juuuuuuuuust right."

"Oh my gosh, Andrew! Don't eat those! ... Those are *poison* arrows!"

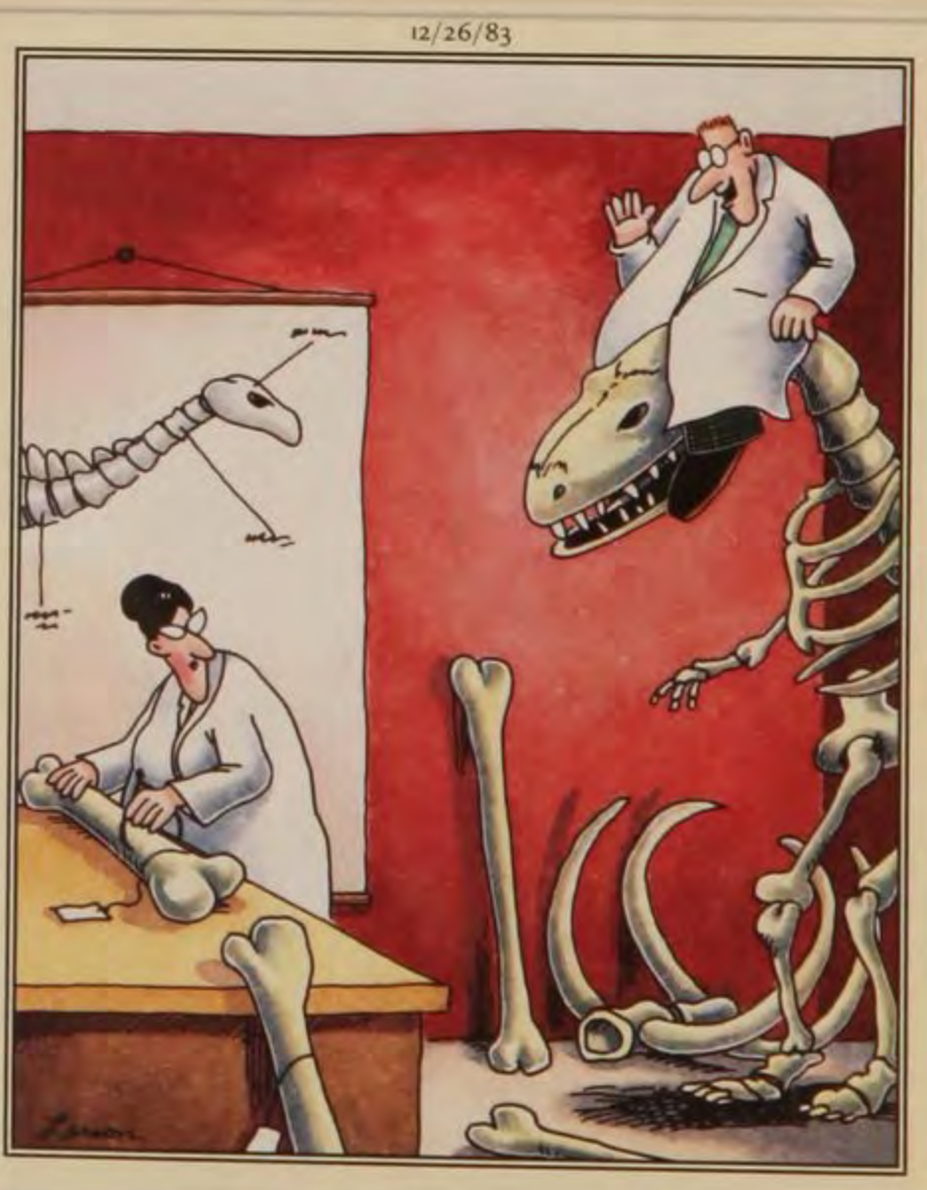
December 1983

Murray is caught desecrating the secret appliance burial grounds.

December 1983

"Oh no, Elliott! Why? ... Why? ..."

"Ernie's a chicken, Ernie's a chicken ..."



"Hi ... Hi, Miss Collins."

December 1983

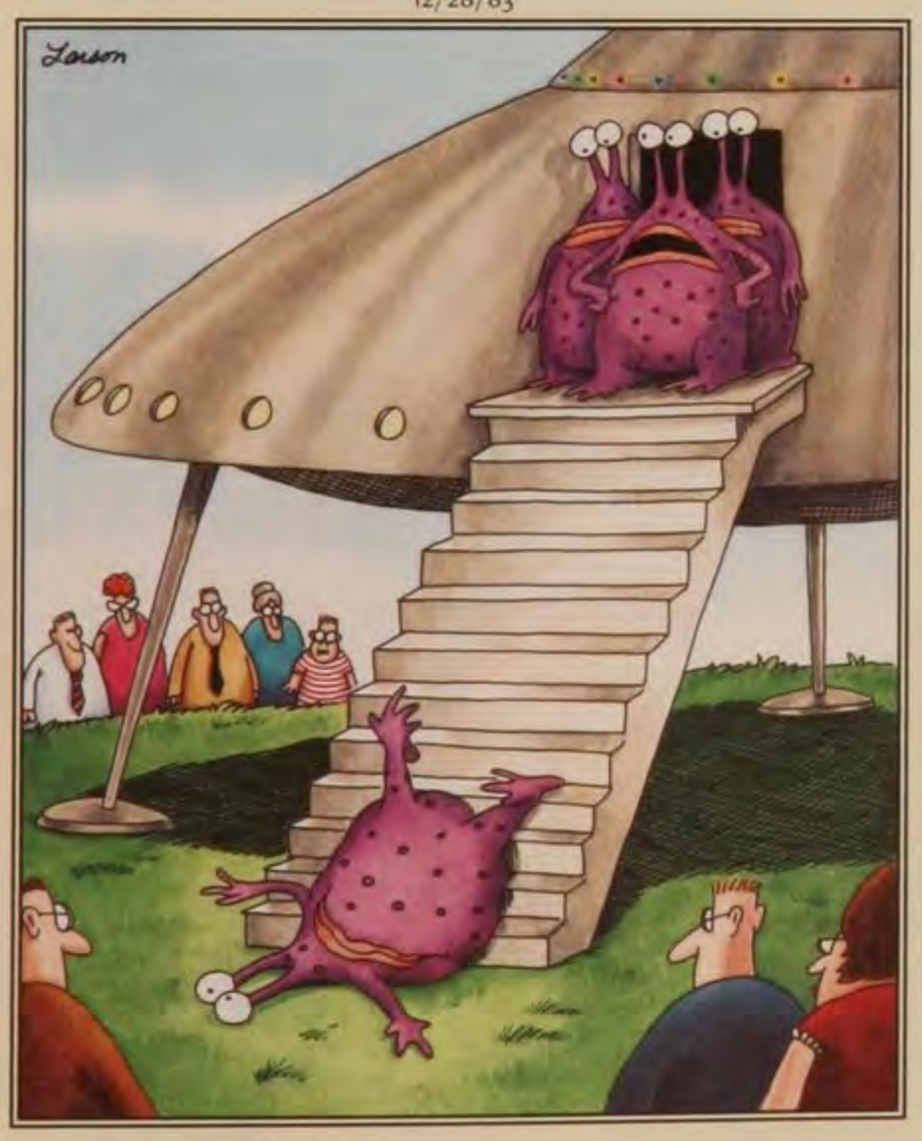
12/29/83

"A one more time! ... HEY! *I've been workin' on the railroad, all the live-long day,* HEY! *I've been ...*"

12/30/83

Elephant skyways

12/28/83



"Wonderful! Just wonderful! ... So much for instilling them with a sense of awe."

12/31/83

"Mom! Edgar's making that clicking sound again!"

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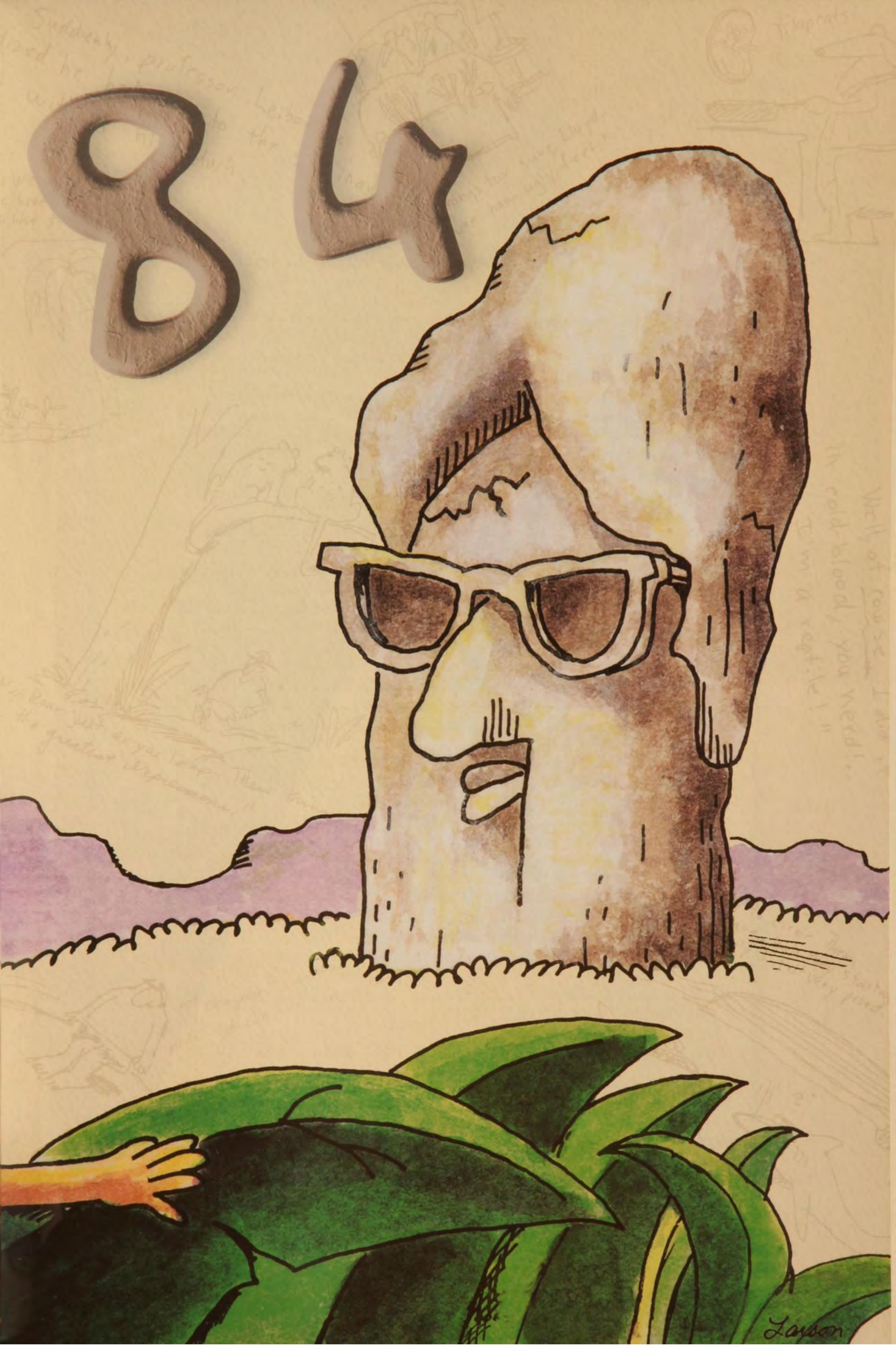


A Bad Day in Cartoon Land

This is something I swore I would never reveal—ever. It was the worst day of my cartooning career—a day when I curled up into a fetal position on the floor of my studio (my usual reaction to adversity) and stayed there until the urge to die had passed.

I had promised myself I would never talk about this to anyone unless someone else brought it up. And no one ever did. (Actually, that's not true. A 12-year-old kid did ask me about it at a book signing, but he was easy to blow off.) In essence, I made it to the end of my career without ever being asked about the thing I had once thought would be my undoing. And oddly enough, 24 hours after my panic had been triggered, my book editor, with a single word, made my worst day ancient history.

It was 1984, and my publisher had been pumping out *Far Side* books with a who-knows-how-long-this-will-last fervor. I was never very keen on this process, as folks there were well aware, but they were the experts, not me. ("Momentum" was one of those words that got bandied around a lot.)

But the more tangible downside to this rush-to-print was the parallel rush to come up with new book titles and covers. I literally could get a phone call on Monday from someone in the production department telling me she needed a book title and a cover on Friday. And complicating the usual frenzy, once you've come out with a book called *The Far Side*, what's next? Hello to the following: *Beyond The Far Side, Valley of The Far Side, In Search of The Far Side, Hound of The Far Side, It Came from The Far Side,* and *Bride of The Far Side.* (Have I left any out?)

Somewhat better titles followed, I think, but for a while things were in a rut. My own idea of just numbering the books—*The Far Side #1, The Far Side #2*, and so on—horrified everyone and didn't get very far.

And so we come to *In Search of The Far Side*. Not a difficult cover and title to conceive, really. Just draw a couple of explorers who have hacked their way through the jungle and are gazing upon a giant stone carving in the image of a woman I often draw. Done.

A couple of months later, the book was printed, and I got a few advance copies. Always exciting. And the cover looked nice. (I drew it, an artist painted it, and you can see it on the previous page.) Then one evening a few friends came over, and there's my latest book to show off. It got passed around, until one person stopped, looked at the cover, and then sort of strangely looked up at me, and said, "Isn't this woman sort of, uh ... phallic-looking?" (DON'T LOOK AT IT!)

My God, that was a horrible evening. I grabbed the book and just stared at the cover. I'm thinking, I'm a dead man. I, Gary Larson, in my rush to meet a deadline, have drawn a gigantic penis on the cover of a book. (I SAID DON'T LOOK!)

I'm telling you, officially, *this was an accident!* Once the stone woman was painted in a contiguous gray, all her usual features blended into a single, uh, element. (Should I be blaming this on the artist?) It was just like I had imagined it, but here was a time when my imagination didn't quite get to the next level. The level of doom.

Enter Donna Martin, my main book editor. I called her the very next morning (early, and from my fetal position on the floor), letting her know the sky was about to fall. At the time, Donna was maybe in her early 50s, conservative-looking, professional, born and raised in America's heartland. Not what you'd call a flamboyant, devil-may-care kind of person. In fact, I wasn't even sure how to tell her what I had done, but somehow I got it out. *In Search of The Far Side*, I told her, had something on the cover that might be "mistaken" for something else. Specifically, Donna—a penis.

Donna was quiet. (I remember this very well.) I knew she was studying the cover. And then she said the one word I never expected, and its impact on me was unbelievable.

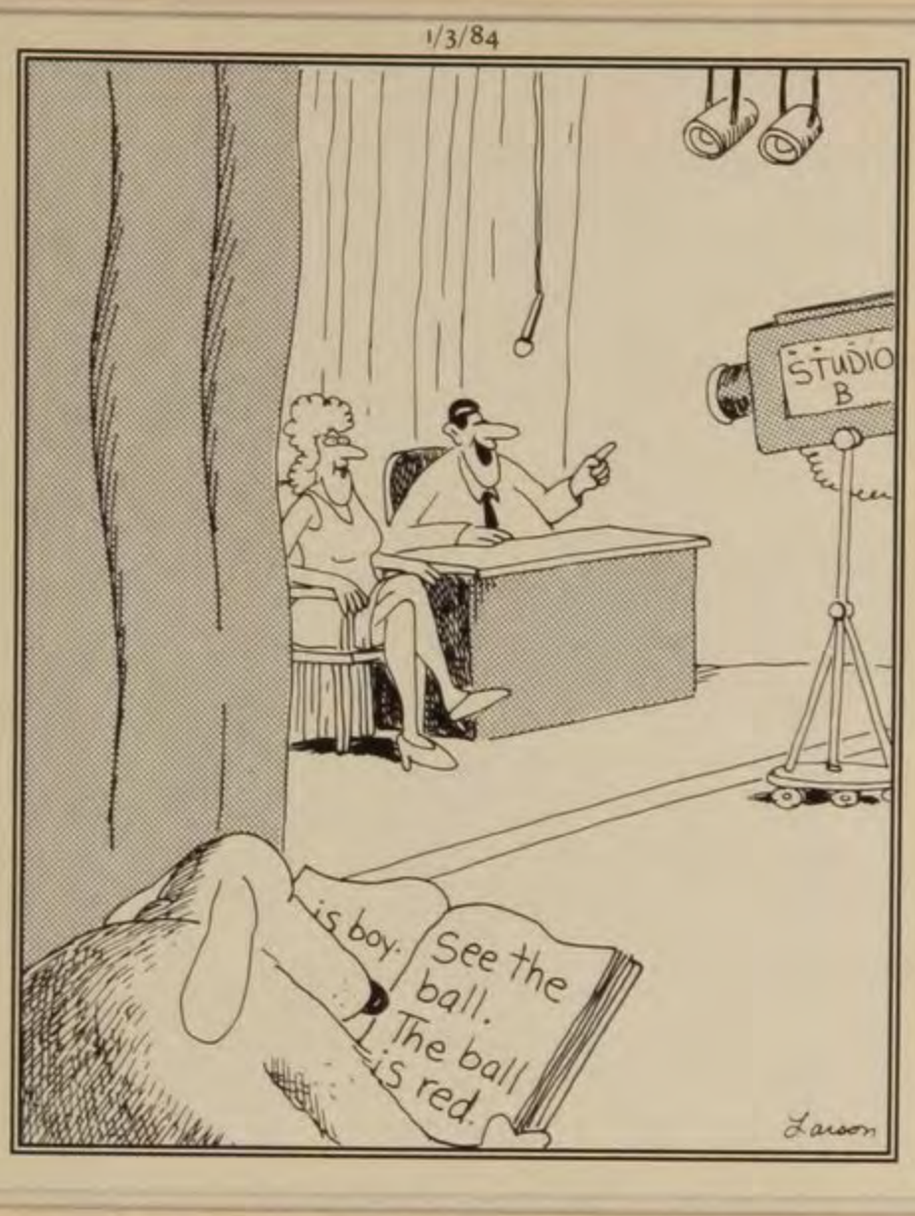
"So?"

That was it. In fact, she didn't even try to reassure me by saying something like, "Oh, Gary, people see what they wanna see." That response would probably have convinced me I *was* doomed. But Donna didn't veer from the issue in the slightest. With absolute calm in her voice, she matter-of-factly stated how cultures all over the world are rife with phallic imagery. Big deal, was her calm assessment. It was like, *C'mon, Gary—I thought you had some major concern to discuss. … I got an office to run here!*

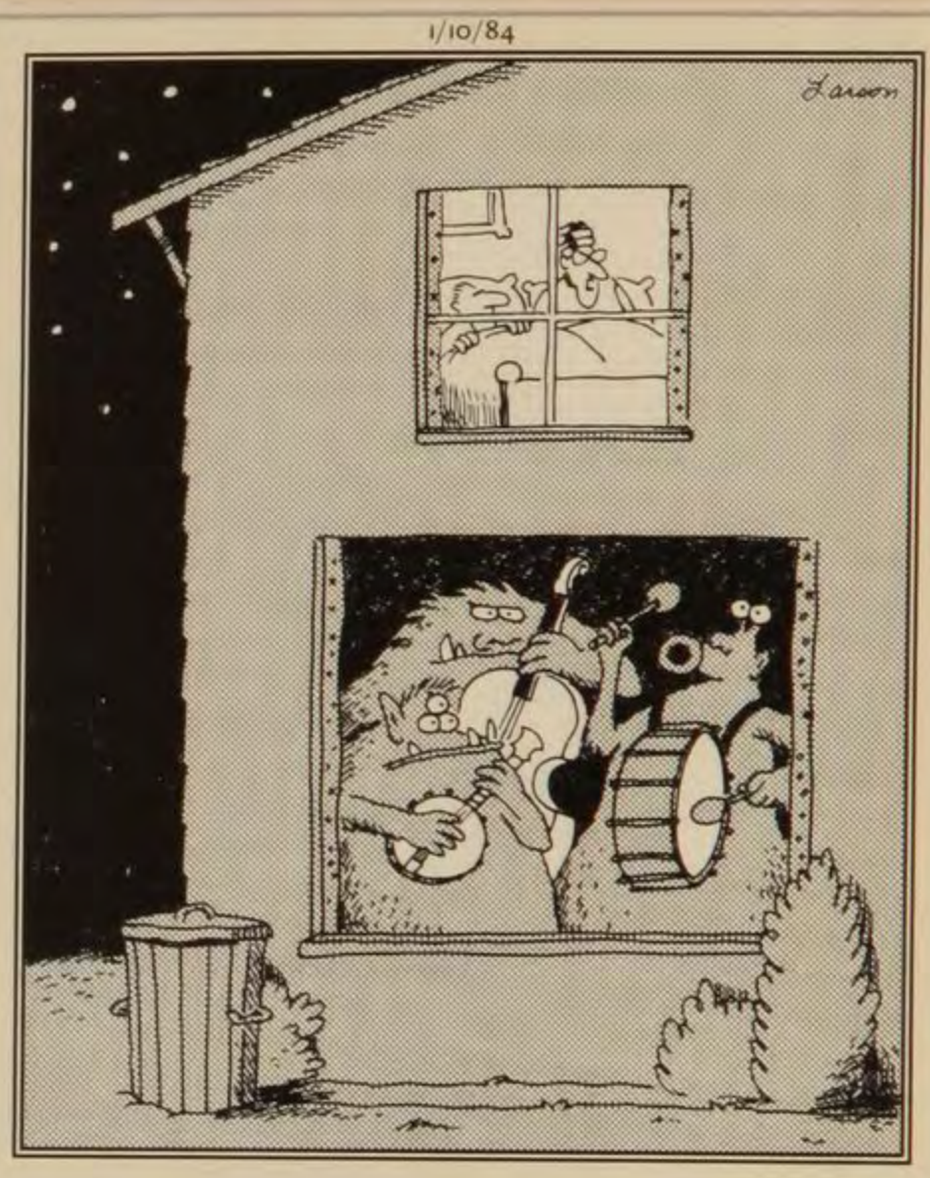
And that's the last time it was ever brought up, by me or anybody else. (Except for that 12-year-old kid.) Over the years, I sometimes wondered what was going on out there among the other people who bought the book, but I never worried about it again. I had my response ready. "Soooooo?" Man, what a great word.

On that day, the worst day of my cartooning life, that single word made every concern just vanish. And, to tell you the truth, I even like that cover. (BUT DON'T LOOK AT IT!)

January 1984

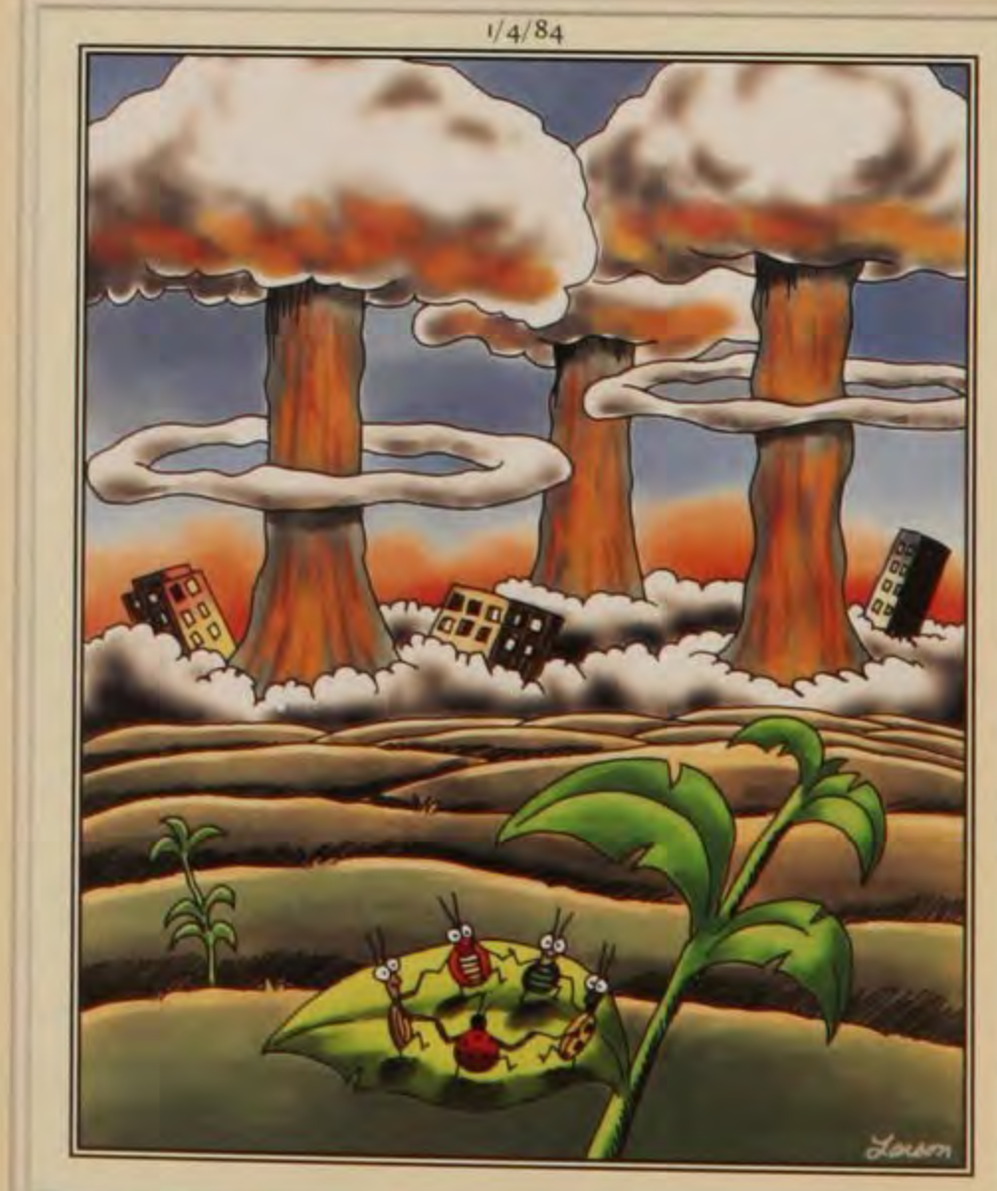


"And now—can dogs really talk? ... We found one who's willing to try, right after this message."

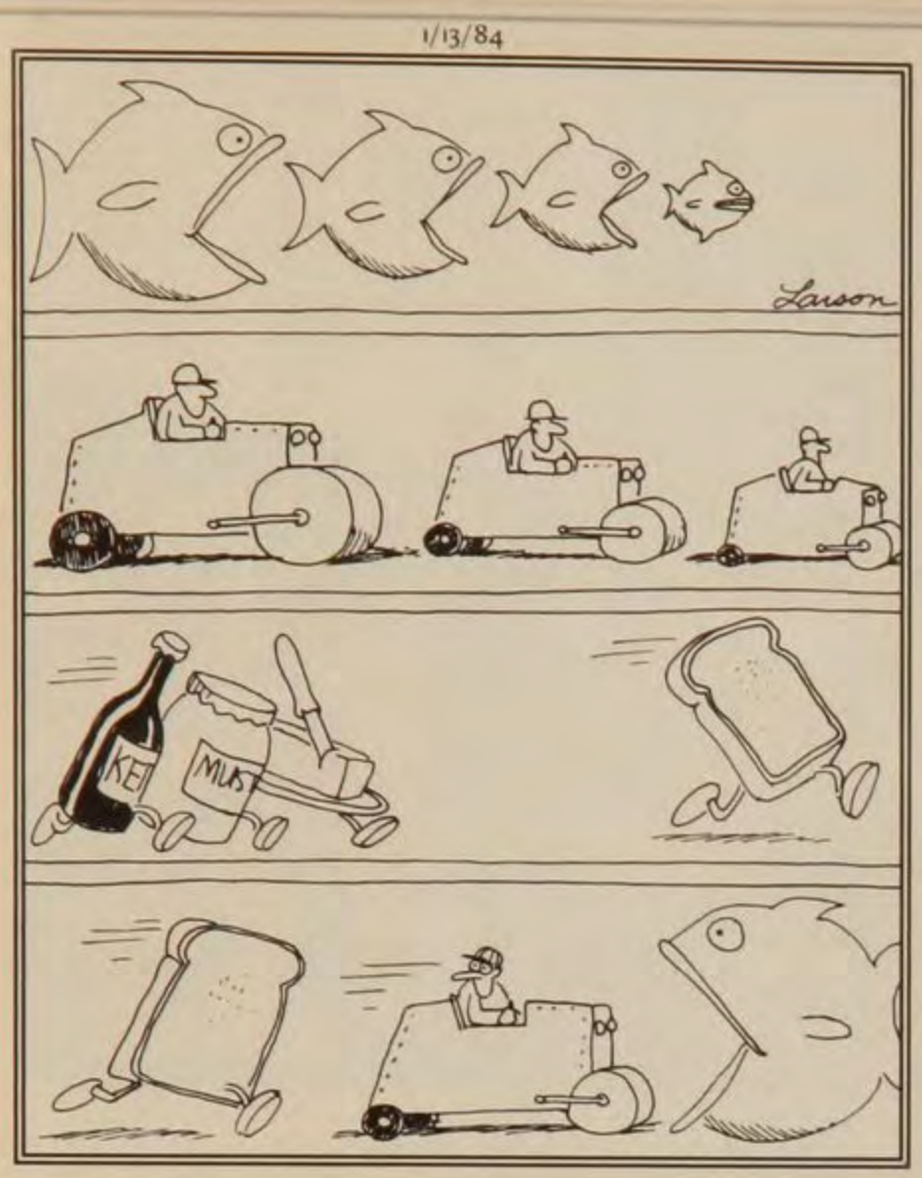


"Well, okay, Frank. ... Maybe it *is* just the wind."

Laboratory peer pressure



January 1984



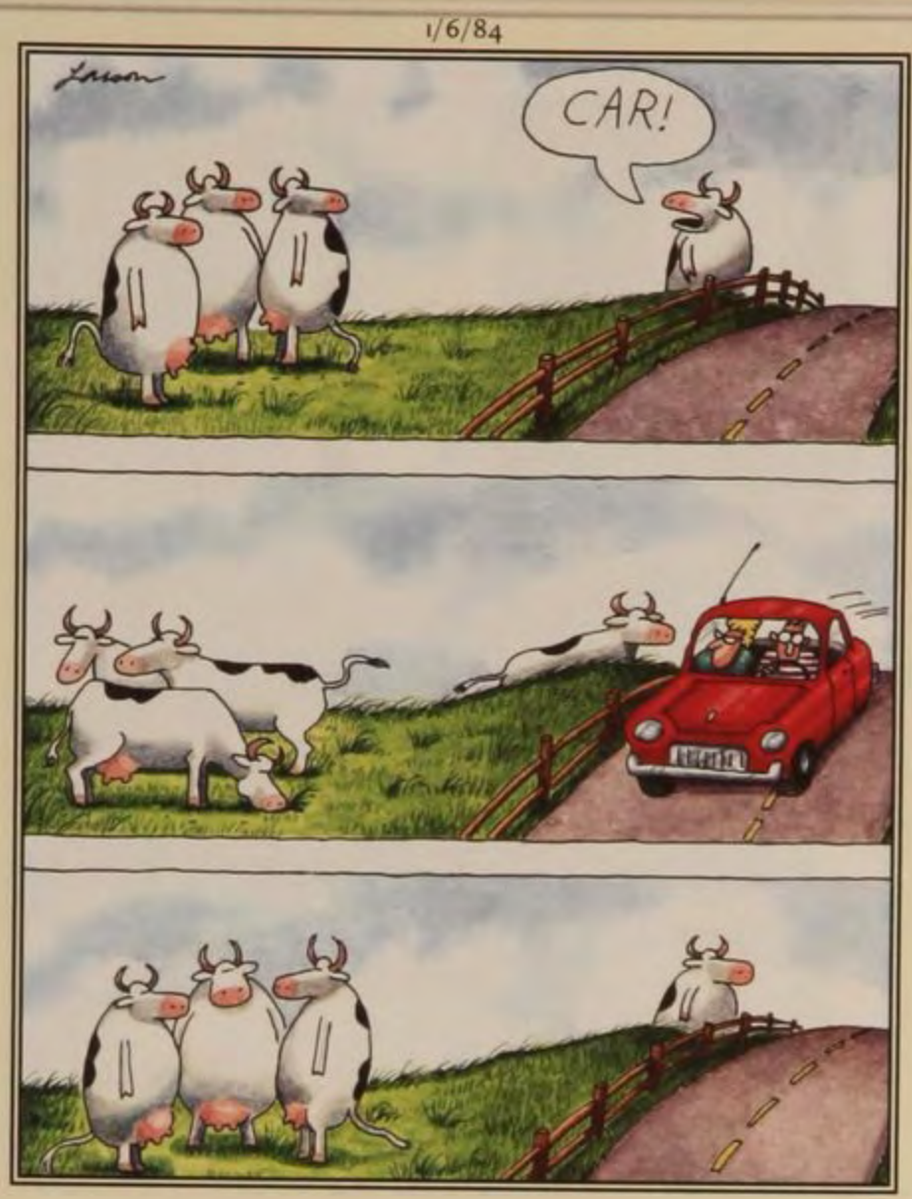
Various philosophies

"You know, Sid, I really like bananas. ... I mean, I know that's not profound or nothin'. ... Heck! We *all* do. ... But for me, I think it goes far beyond that."

"Listen ... I'm fed up with this 'weeding out the sick and the old' business. ... I want something in its prime."

"Say, there's something wrong here. ... We may have to move shortly."

January 1984



"Now calm down, Barbara. ... We haven't looked everywhere yet, and an elephant can't hide in here forever."

"Whoa, Frank. ... Guess what youuuuuuuuu sat in!"

January 1984

"What are you gonna tell your dad, Chuck?"

When clowns go bad

"Wait a minute! Just wait a minute! No need to worry. ... According to this, we're dealing with a rhino *mimic!*"

January 1984

1/20/84

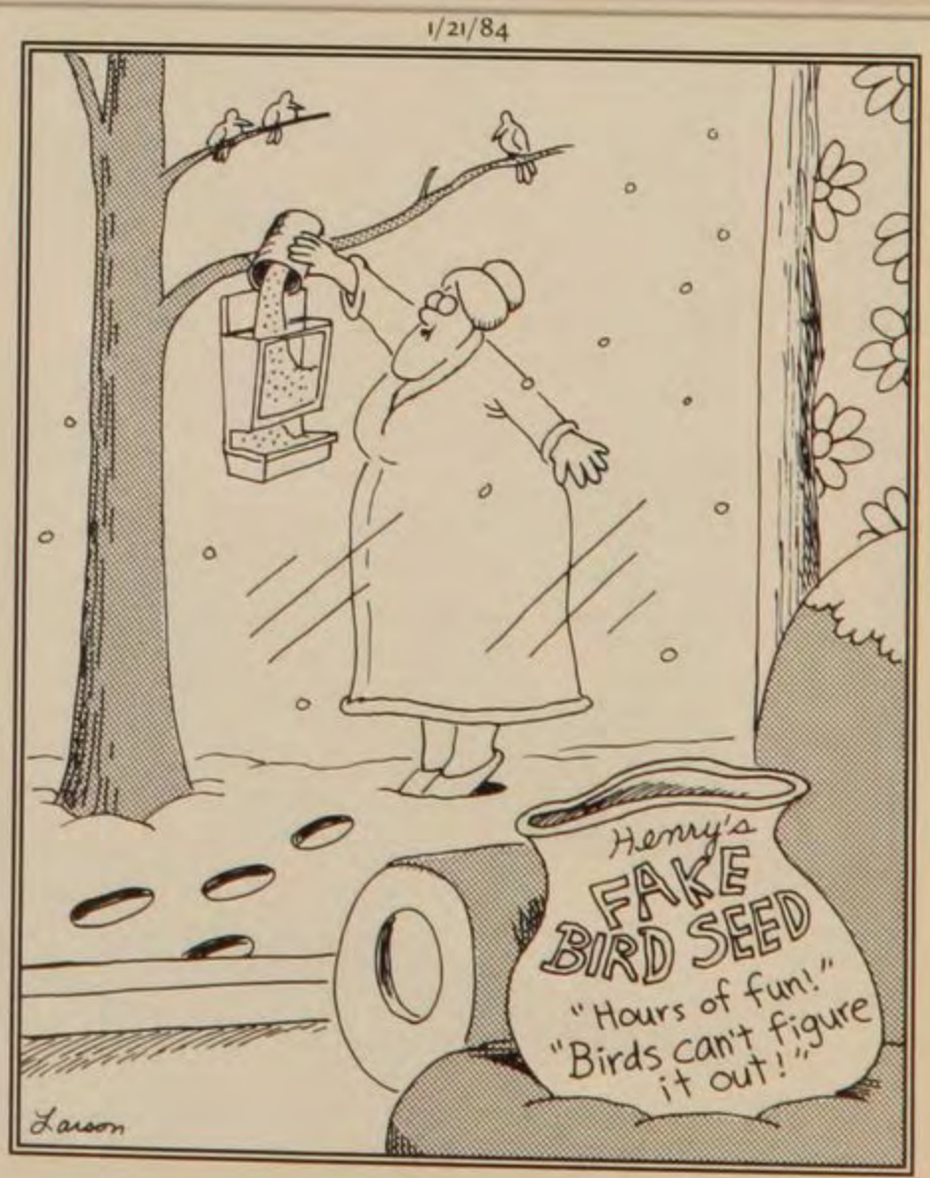
"Dang! ... Sorry, buddy."

1/19/84

"Calm down, everyone! I've had experience with this sort of thing before. ... Does someone have a hammer?"

1/18/84

1/21/84



January 1984

1/24/84

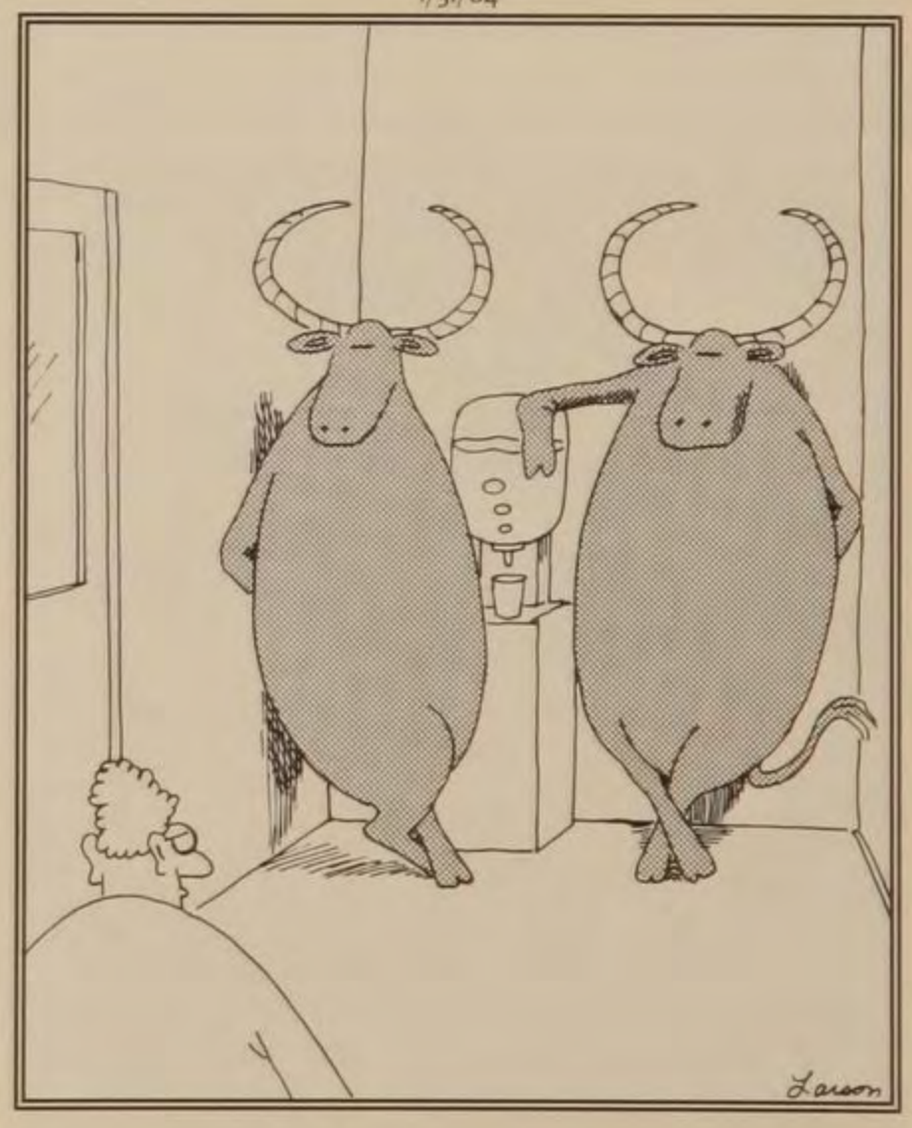
1/25/84

"Dibs."

1/28/84

Confused by the loud drums, Roy is flushed into the net.

1/31/84



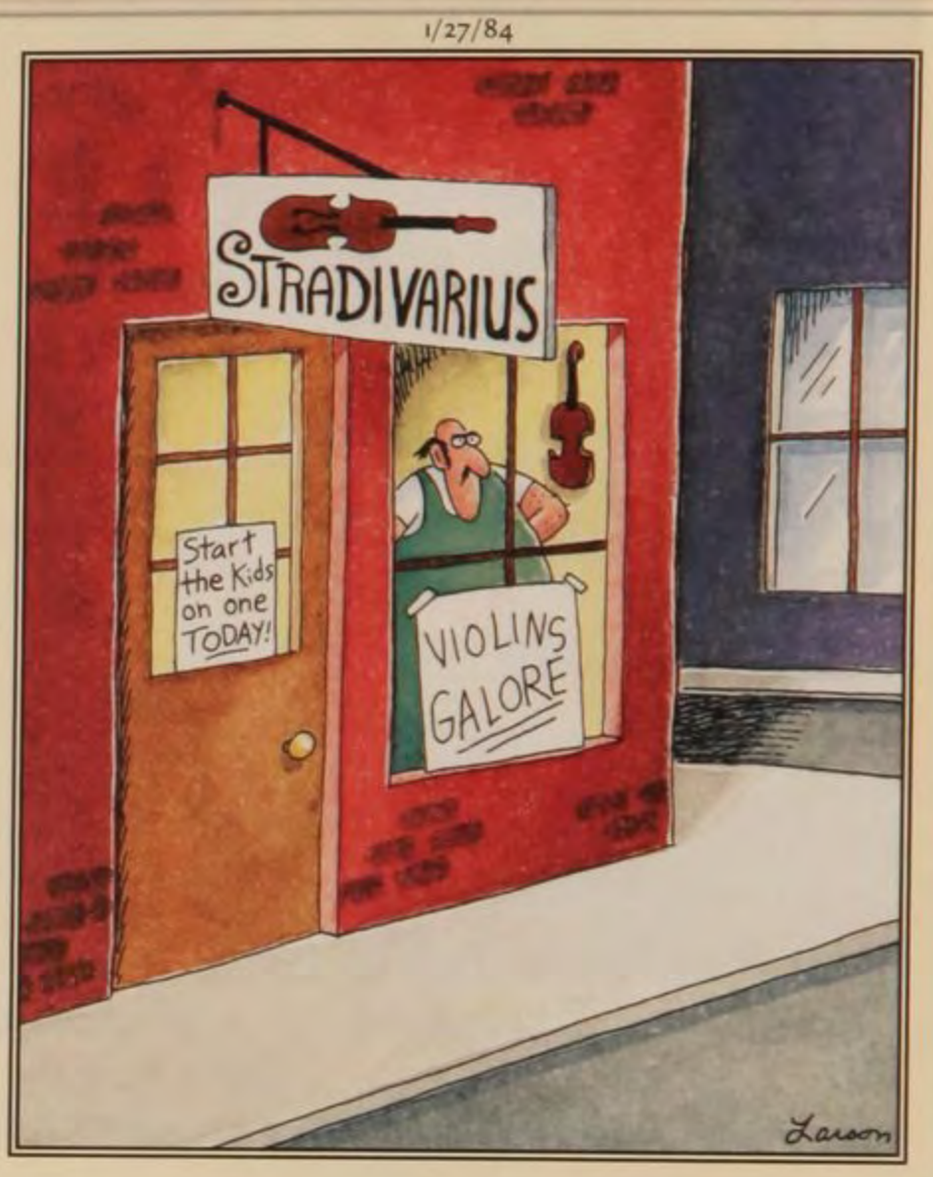
Water buffaloes

January 1984

1/23/84

"Thunderstick? ... You actually said, 'Thunderstick'? ... That, my friend, is a Winchester thirty-aught-six."

1/27/84



1/26/84

"For the one-hundredth time in as many days—I HAVEN'T GOT A QUARTER!"

1/30/84

"No, thank you ... I don't jump."

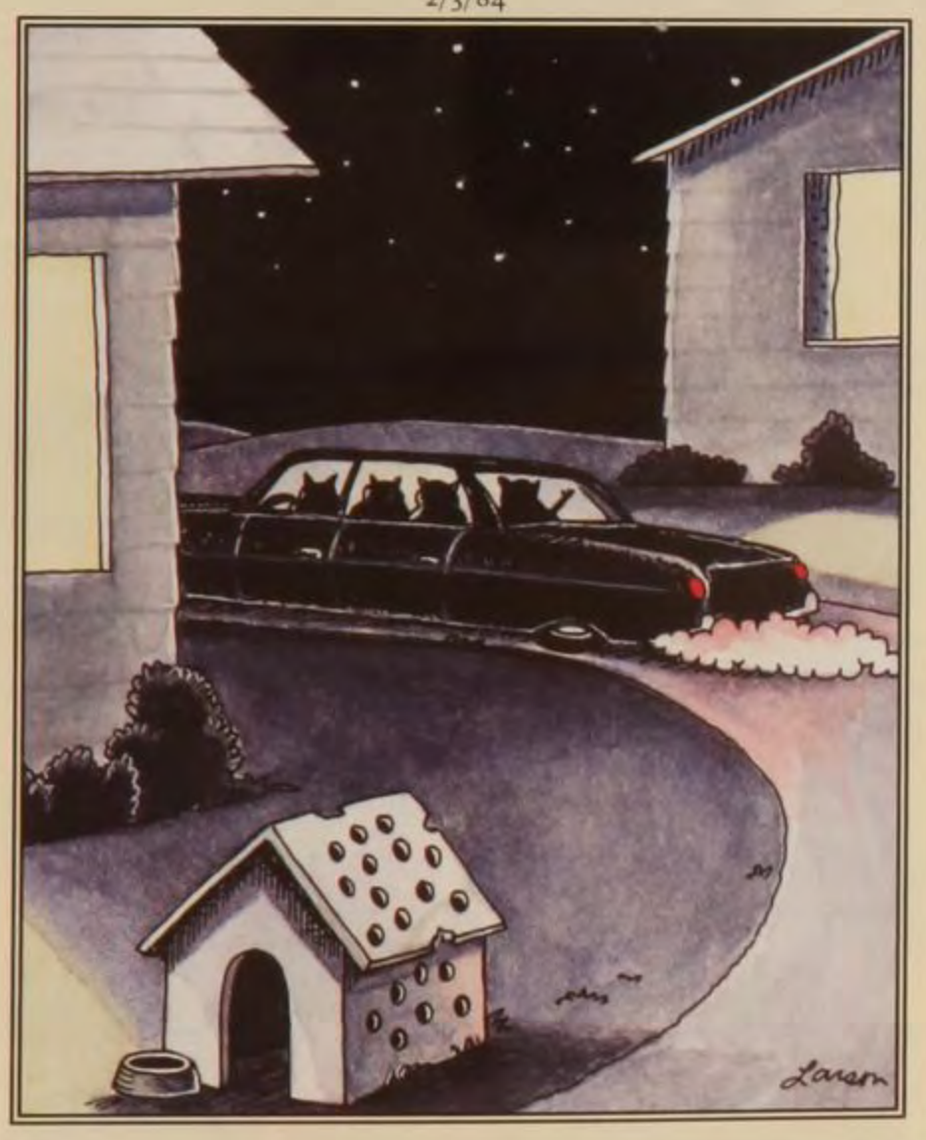
February 1984

2/2/84

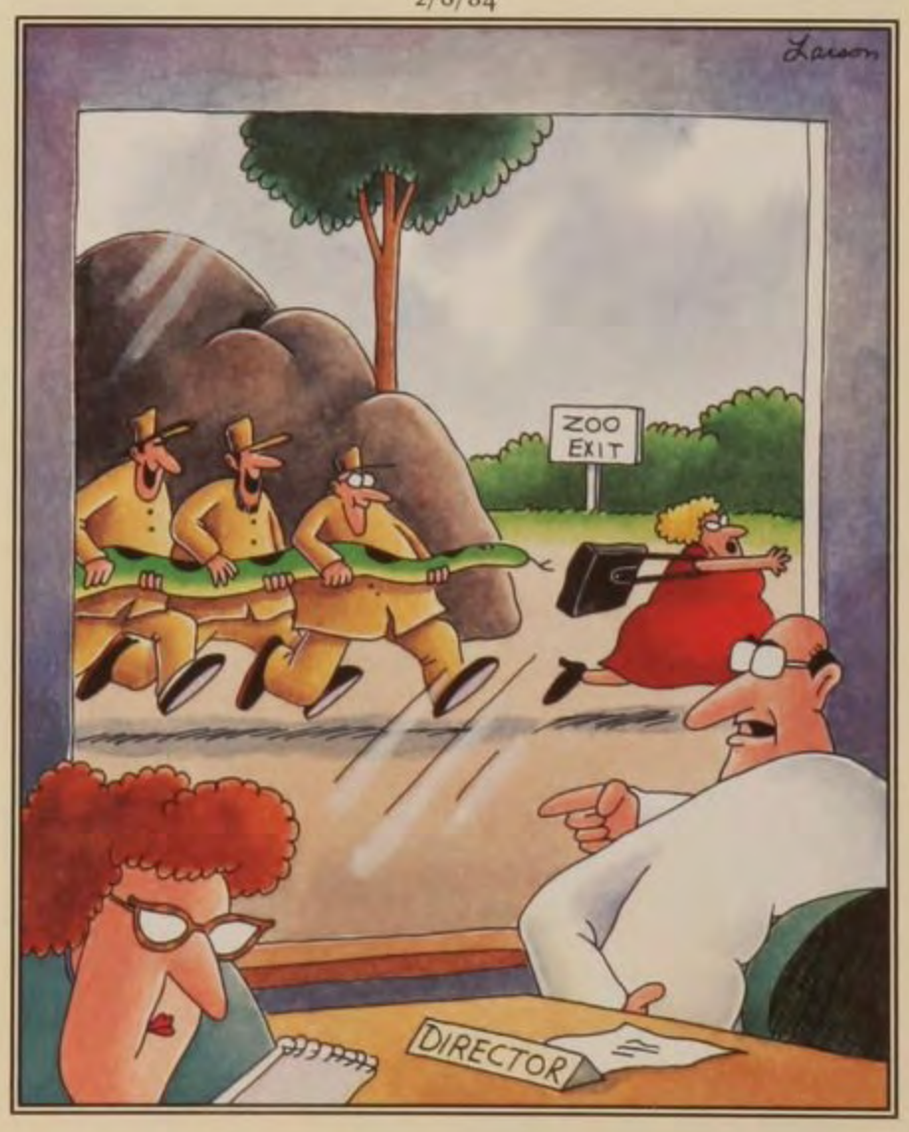
2/4/84

Paramecium humor

2/3/84



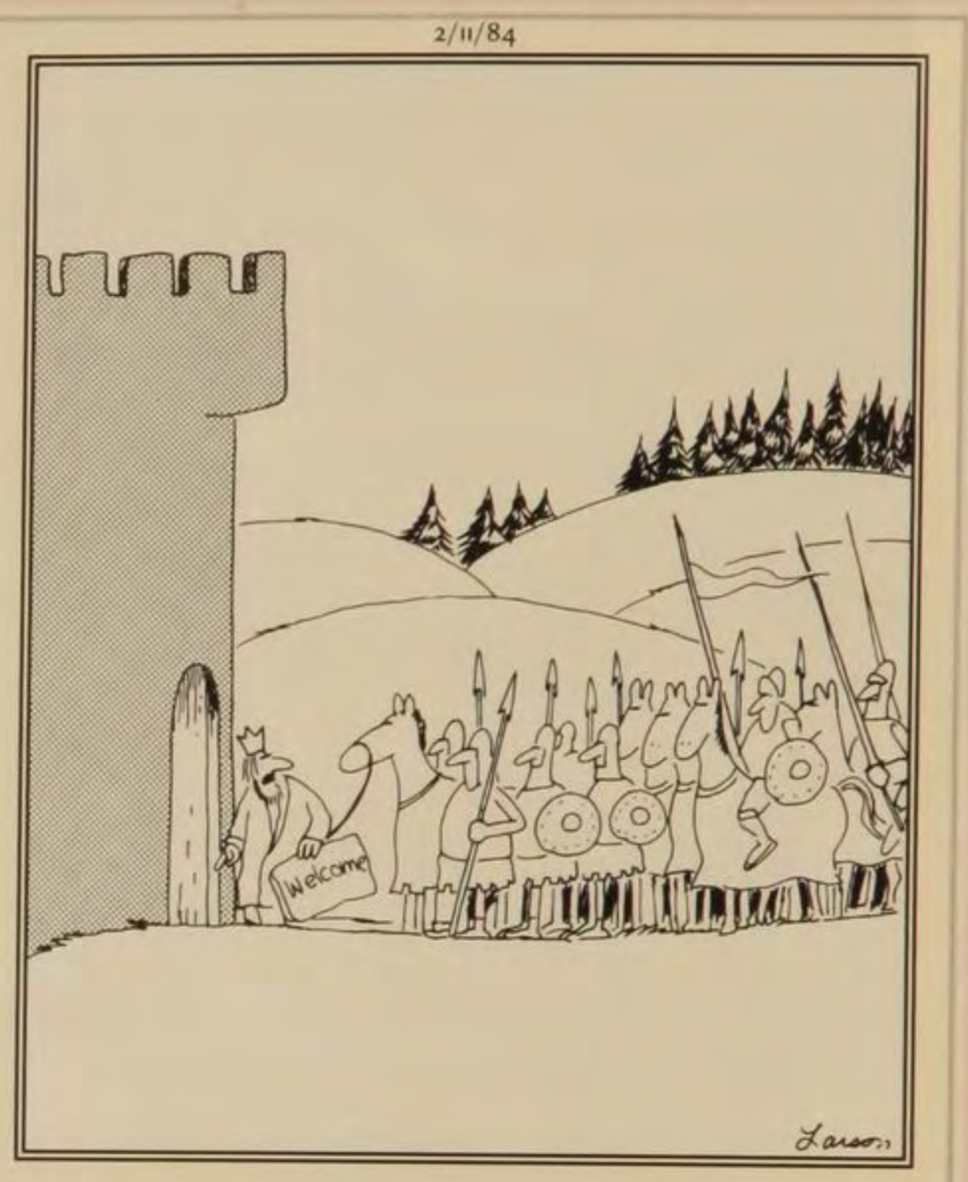
2/6/84



"Take another memo, Miss Wilkens. ... I want to see all reptile personnel in my office first thing tomorrow morning!"

February 1984

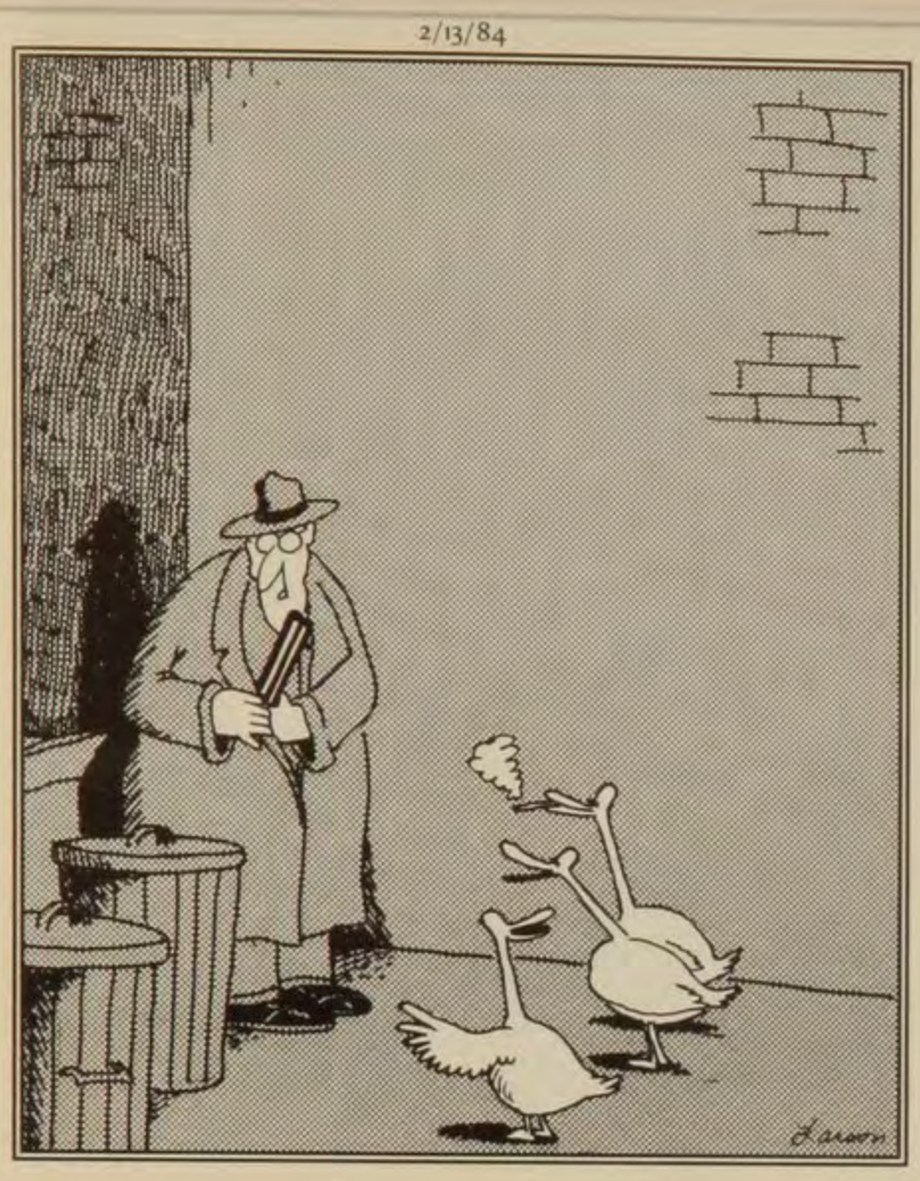
"Irwin, you're nothing but a spineless, slimy, gelatinous blob. ... There, I've finally said it."



"Well, this is great. ... Some imbecile has taken the key from under the mat!"

"Vernon! That light! ... The Jeffersons' dog is back!"

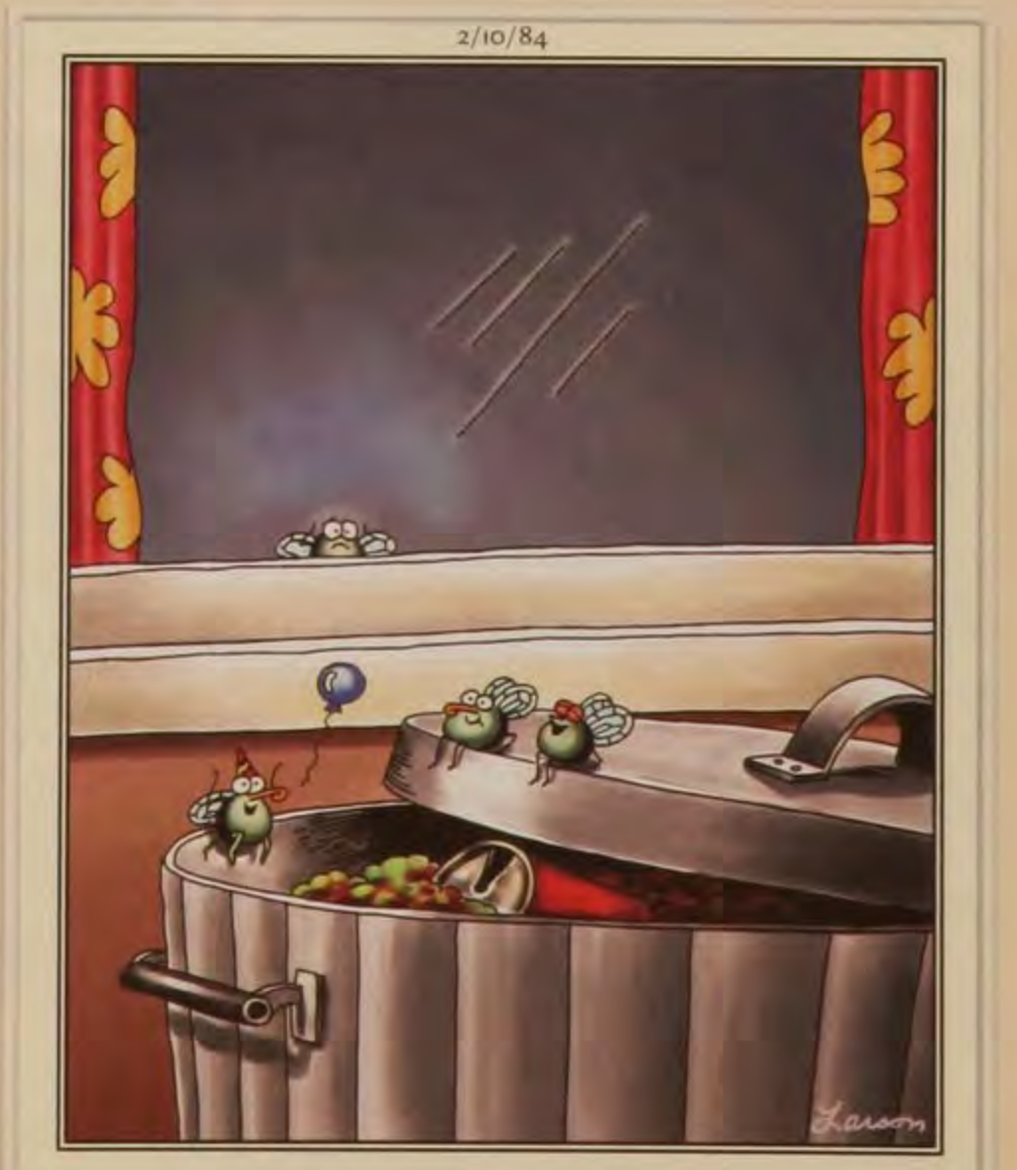
February 1984



Cornered by the street ducks, Phil wasn't exactly sure what to do—and then he remembered his 12 gauge.

"I've had it! This time I've really had it! ... Jump the fence again, will he? ... Dang!"

Pet tricks on other planets



February 1984

2/14/84

"Here's the last entry in Carlson's journal: 'Having won their confidence, tomorrow I shall test the humor of these giant but gentle primates with a simple joy-buzzer handshake.'"

2/16/84

"It's back, Arnie! Okay—get the book! ... We're gonna settle whether it's an alligator or a crocodile once and for all!"

2/15/84

"Hold it right there, Charles! ... Not on our first date, you don't!"

February 1984

2/18/84

"You fool! 'Bring the honey,' I said. ...
This isn't the same thing!"

2/20/84

"Well, of *course* I did it in cold blood,
you idiot! ... I'm a reptile!"

2/24/84

"Well, you've overslept and missed your
vine again."

2/29/84

Suddenly, Professor Liebowitz realizes he has
come to the seminar without his duck.

"Well, what have I always said?... Sheep and cattle just don't mix."

"Aaaaaaa! ... No, Zooky! Grok et bok! ... Shoosh! Shoosh! ..."

The origin of clothes

February 1984

"And now, Randy, by use of song, the male sparrow will stake out his territory ... an instinct common in the lower animals."

"I've got an idea. ... How many here have ever seen Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*?"

"Well, I dunno, Warren ... I think your feet may be uglier than mine."

March 1984

3/1/84

"What the? ... *Another* little casket?"

3/2/84

3/3/84

3/7/84

March 1984

"Aaaaaaaa! ... It's George! He's taking it with him!"

"March 5, 1984: After several months, I now feel that these strange little rodents have finally accepted me as one of their own."

"Grobby! Bad! ... Not put things down Oona's back no more!"

"Always keep label up, Dag."

March 1984

3/6/84

Snake dreams

3/12/84

"And now Edgar's gone. ... Something's going on around here."

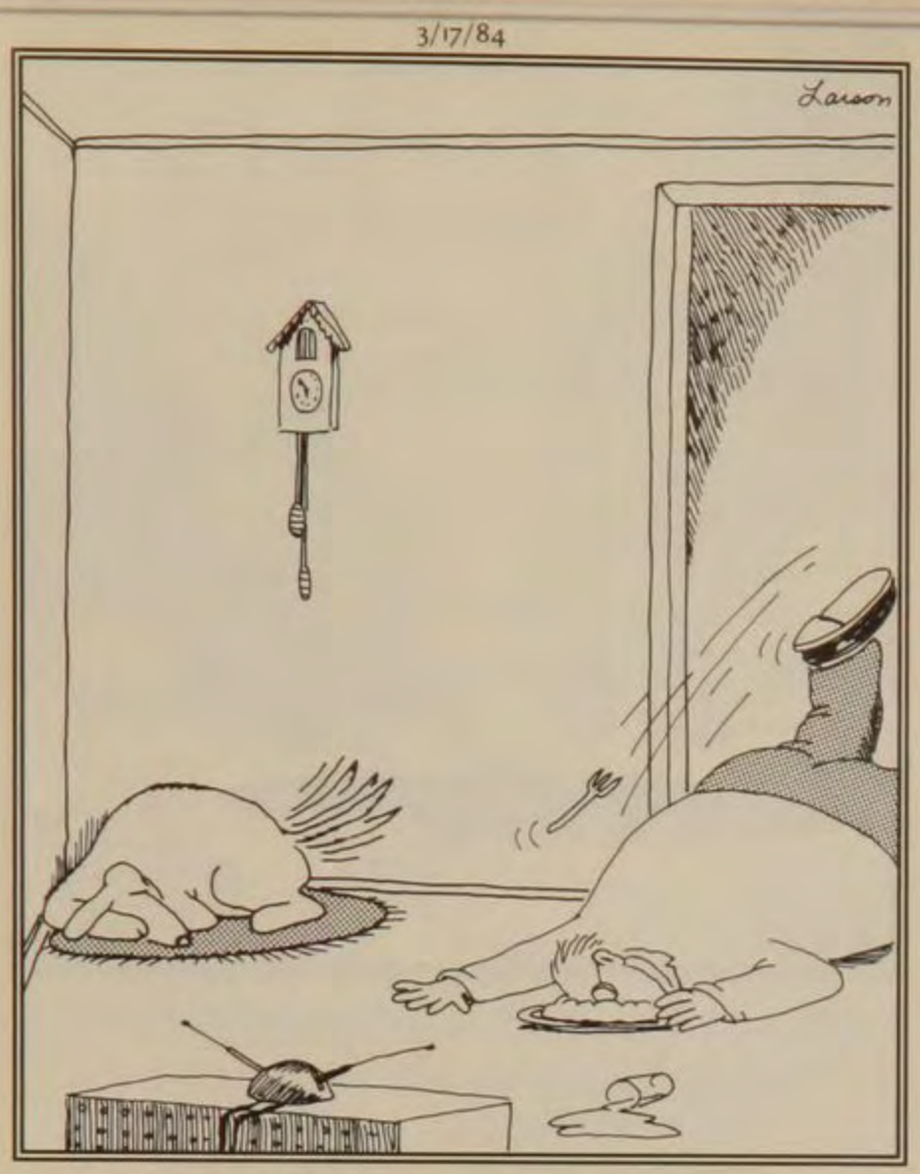
3/13/84

"Hmmmm. ... Are the red ants right off the hill?"

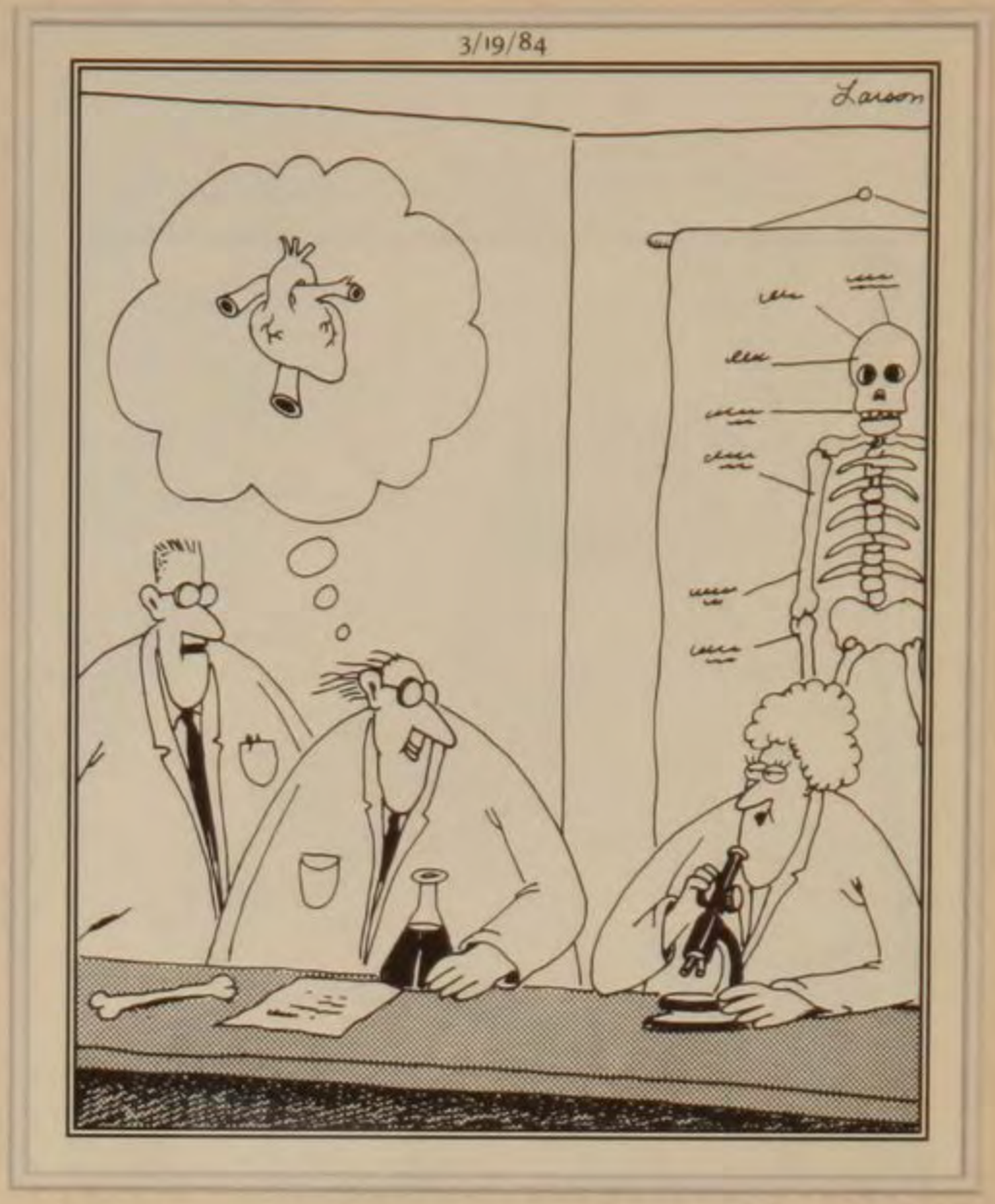
3/15/84

Analyzing humor

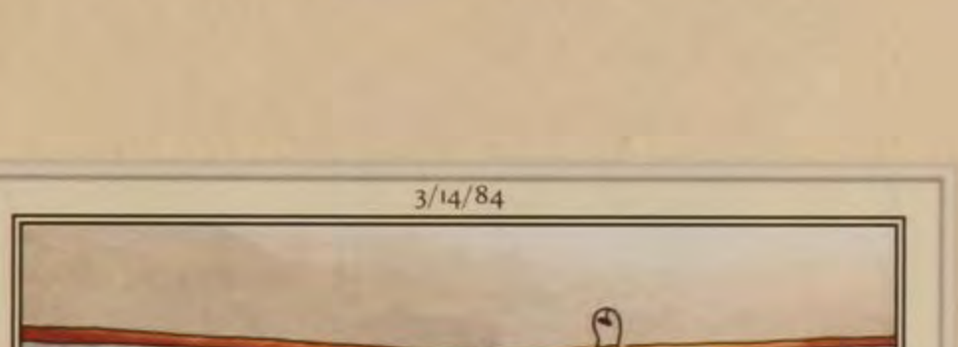
March 1984



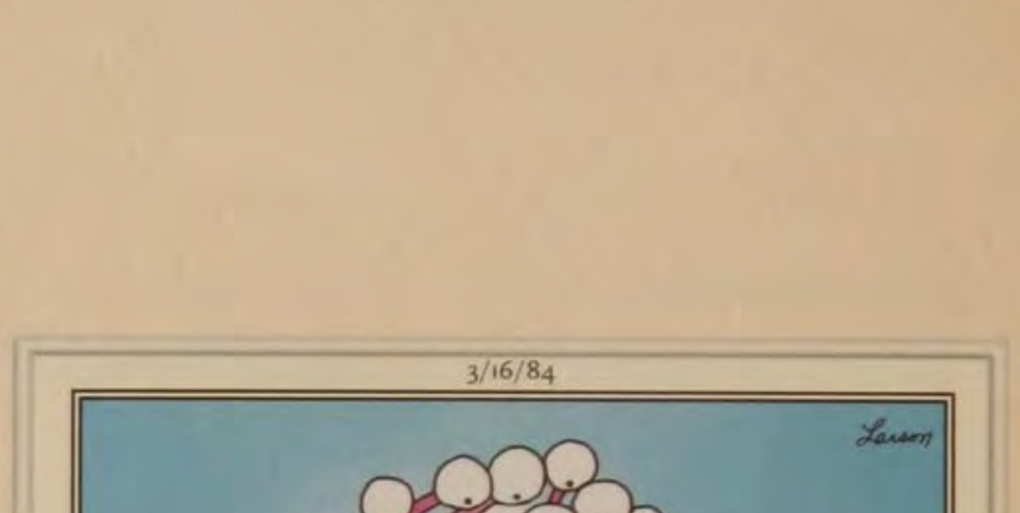
Stimulus-response behavior in dogs



"I believe, Farnsworth, that the data from the previous tissue sample was ... Farnsworth! Are you listening to me?"



"Oh, that's right! You *did* have a hat. ... I believe you'll find it in the other room."



"Guess who!"

March 1984

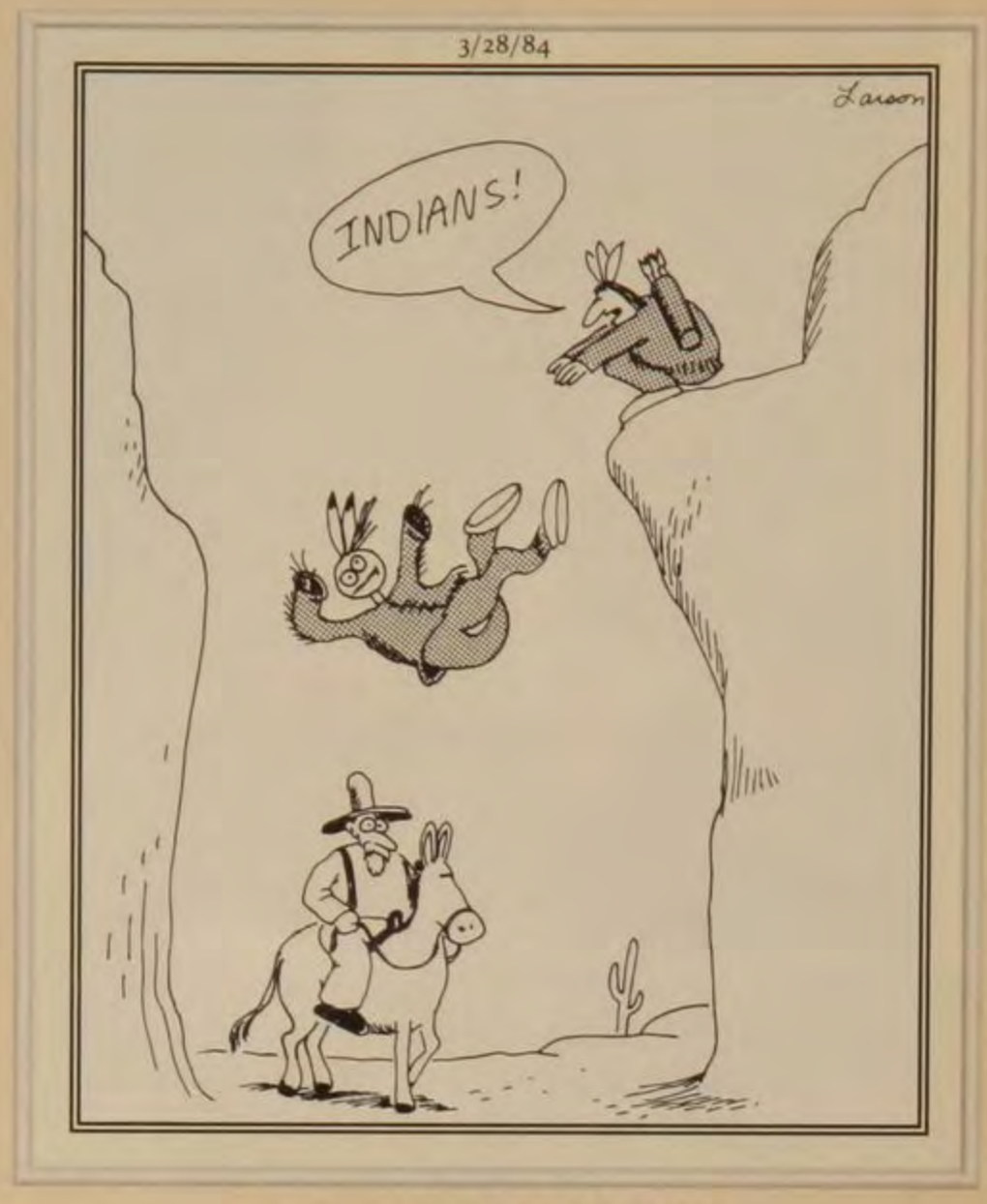
Nature scenes we rarely see

"That time was just too close, George! ... Jimmy was headed straight for the snake-pit when I grabbed him!"

"Listen ... you've got to relax. ... The more you think about changing colors, the less chance you'll succeed. ... Shall we try the green background again?"

March 1984

The birth of jazz

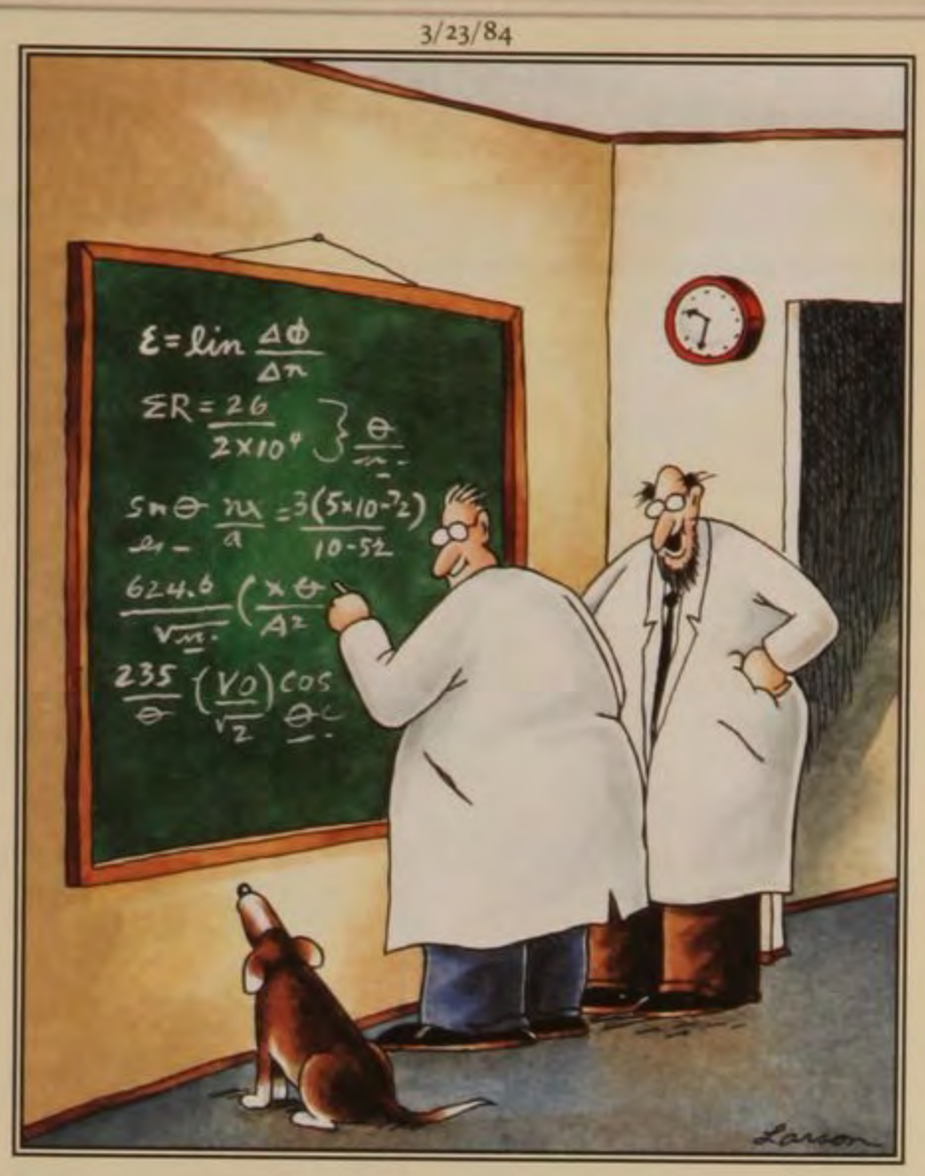


Humor in the Old West

Anteaters of the future

March 1984

3/23/84

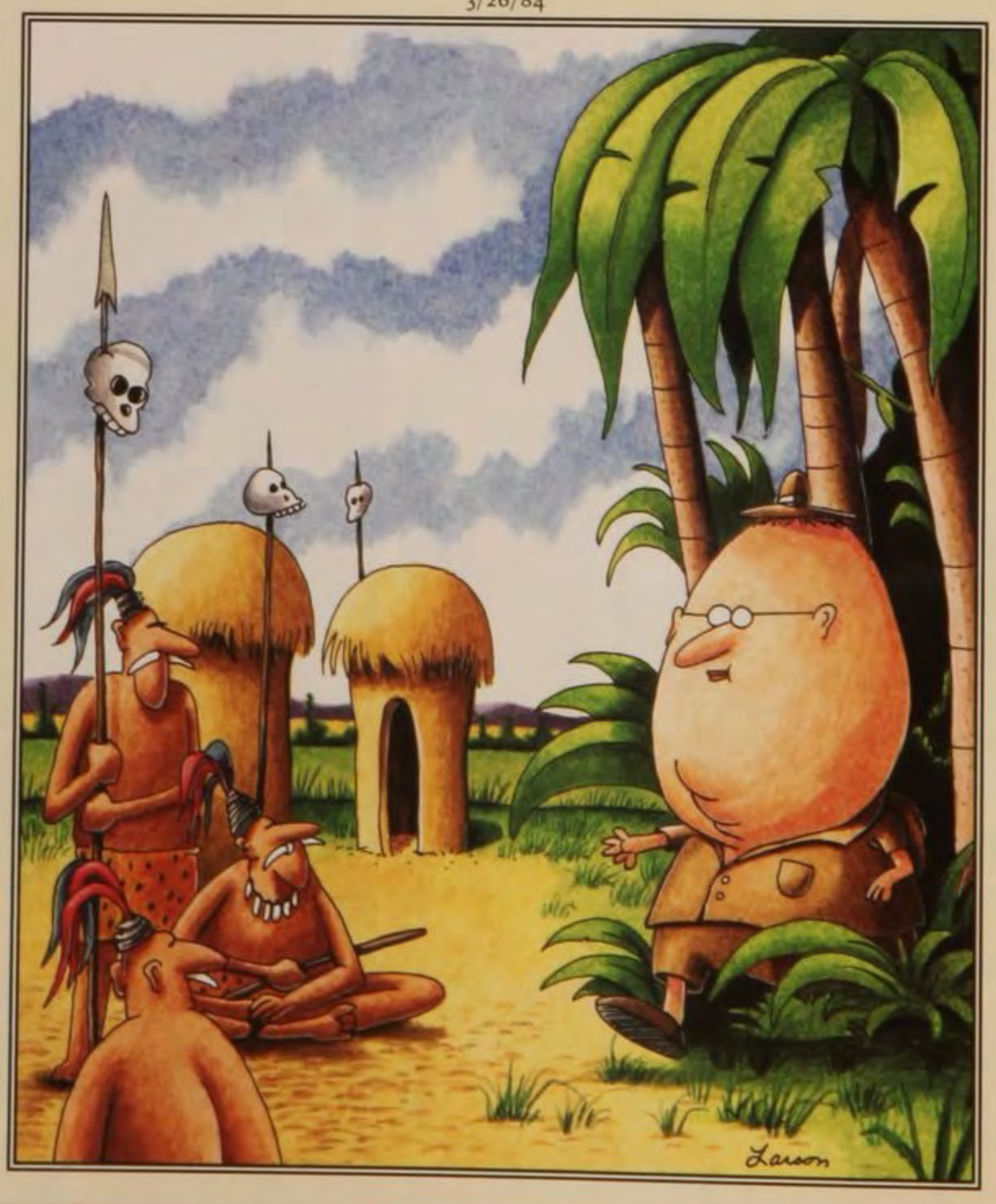


"Ohhhhhhh. ... Look at that, Schuster. ... Dogs are so cute when they try to comprehend quantum mechanics."

3/29/84

"Well, there it goes again. ... And we just sit here without opposable thumbs."

3/26/84



Unwittingly, Palmer stepped out of the jungle and into headhunter folklore forever.

April 1984

"Well, they finally came ... but before I go, let's see you roll over a couple times."

Humor at its lowest form

April 1984

"Carl! Watch for holes!"

How social animals work together

Releasing the shaft, Red Bear falls victim to the old fake-bow-and-arrow trick.

April 1984

4/7/84

April 1984

4/5/84

"Well, there is some irony in all this, you know. ... I mean, we *both* lose a contact at the same time?!"

4/9/84

4/10/84

4/14/84

"Aha! As I always suspected! ... I better not ever catch you drinking right from the bottle *again!*"

April 1984

4/18/84

"The white whale! The whiiiiiiite wh ... no, no ... my mistake! ... A black whale! A regular, blaaaaaack whale!"

4/17/84

4/19/84

"So! They're back, are they?"

4/21/84

"Well, here we all are at the Grand Canyon ... but, as usual, Johnny just had to ruin the picture for everyone else."

April 1984

4/16/84

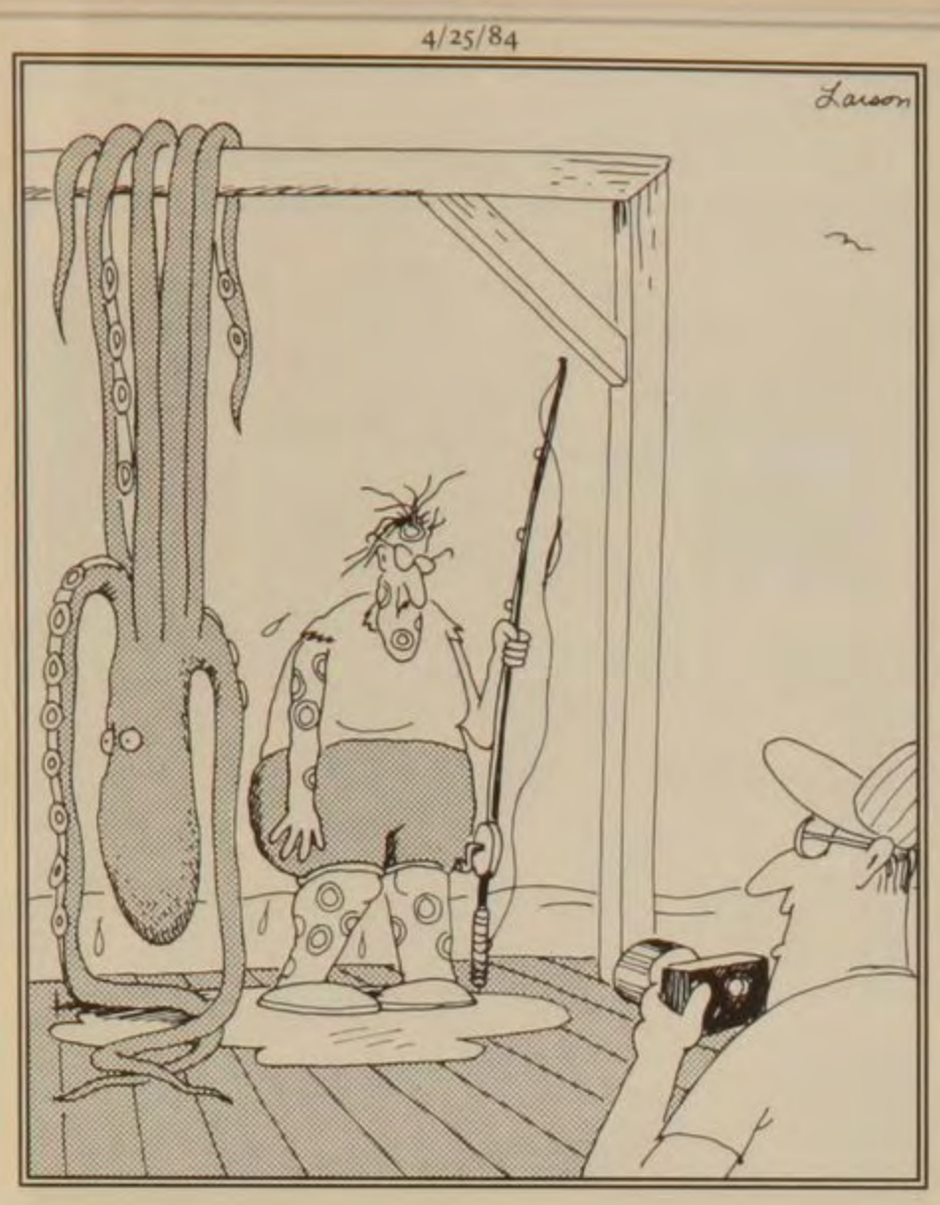
"Well, they're unimpressed. ... And now what are *we* going to do with fifty cases of butane lighters?"

4/24/84

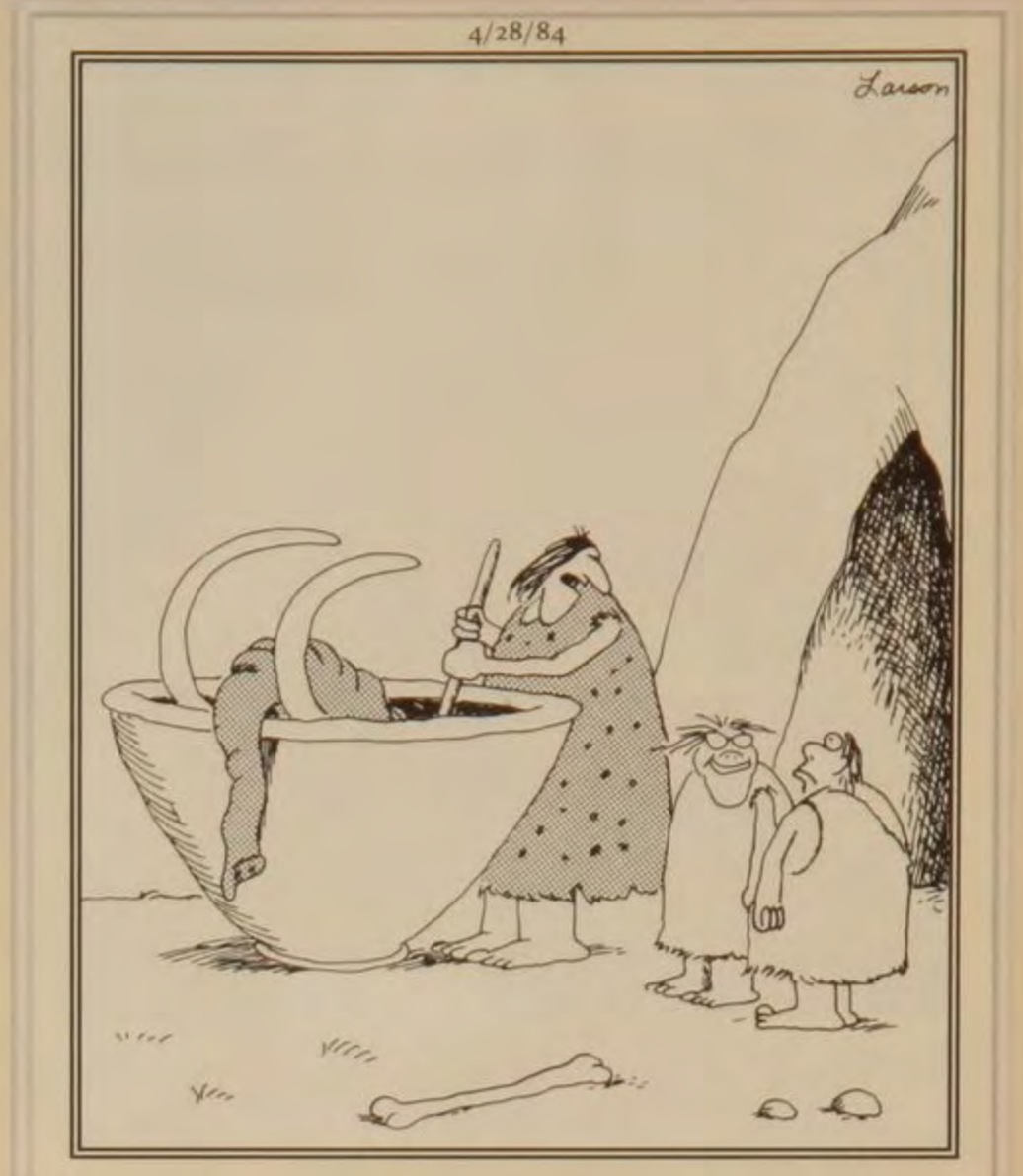
"Do what you will to me, but I'll never talk! ... NEVER! And, after me, there'll come others—and others—and others! Ha ha ha!"

4/20/84

April 1984



"Oo! I know, Doris! ... Drape one of his arms over your shoulder!"



"No, Zak. ... It Wilga's turn lick bowl."

Trying to calm the herd, Jake himself was suddenly awestruck by the image of beauty and unbridled fury on the cliff above. Pink Shadow had returned.

April 1984

4/26/84

On the next pass, however, Helen failed to clear the mountains.

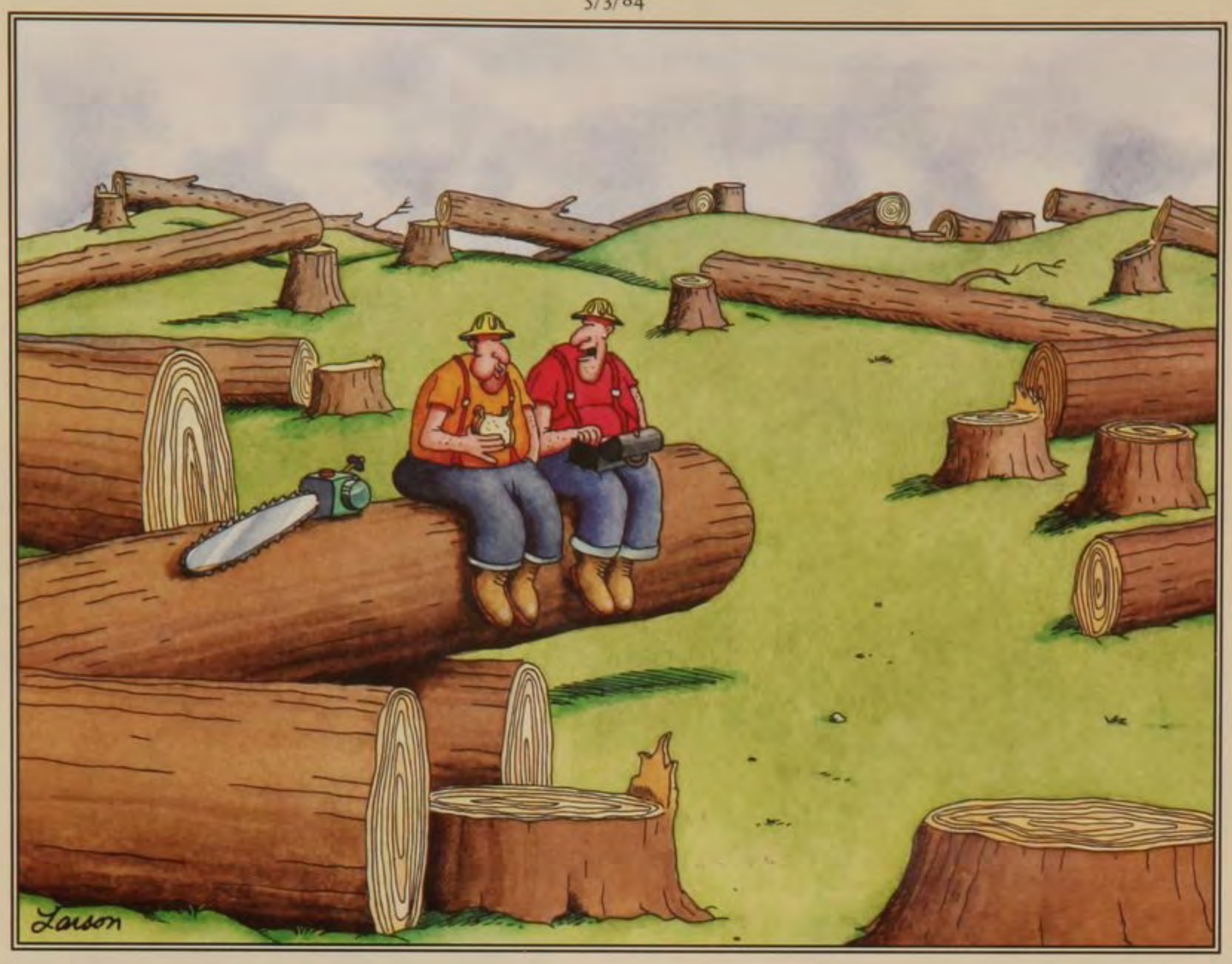
4/30/84

"What have I told you about eating in bed?"

4/27/84

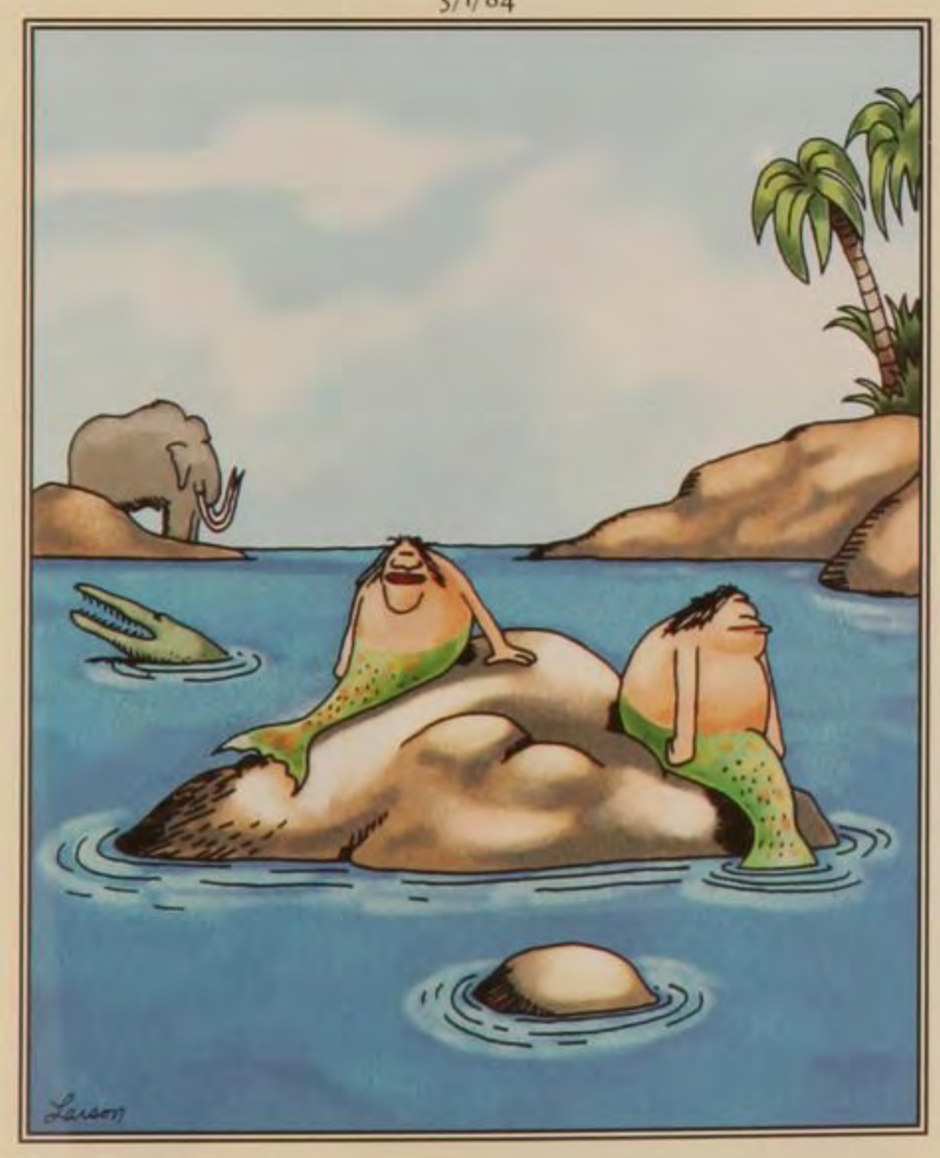
May 1984

5/3/84



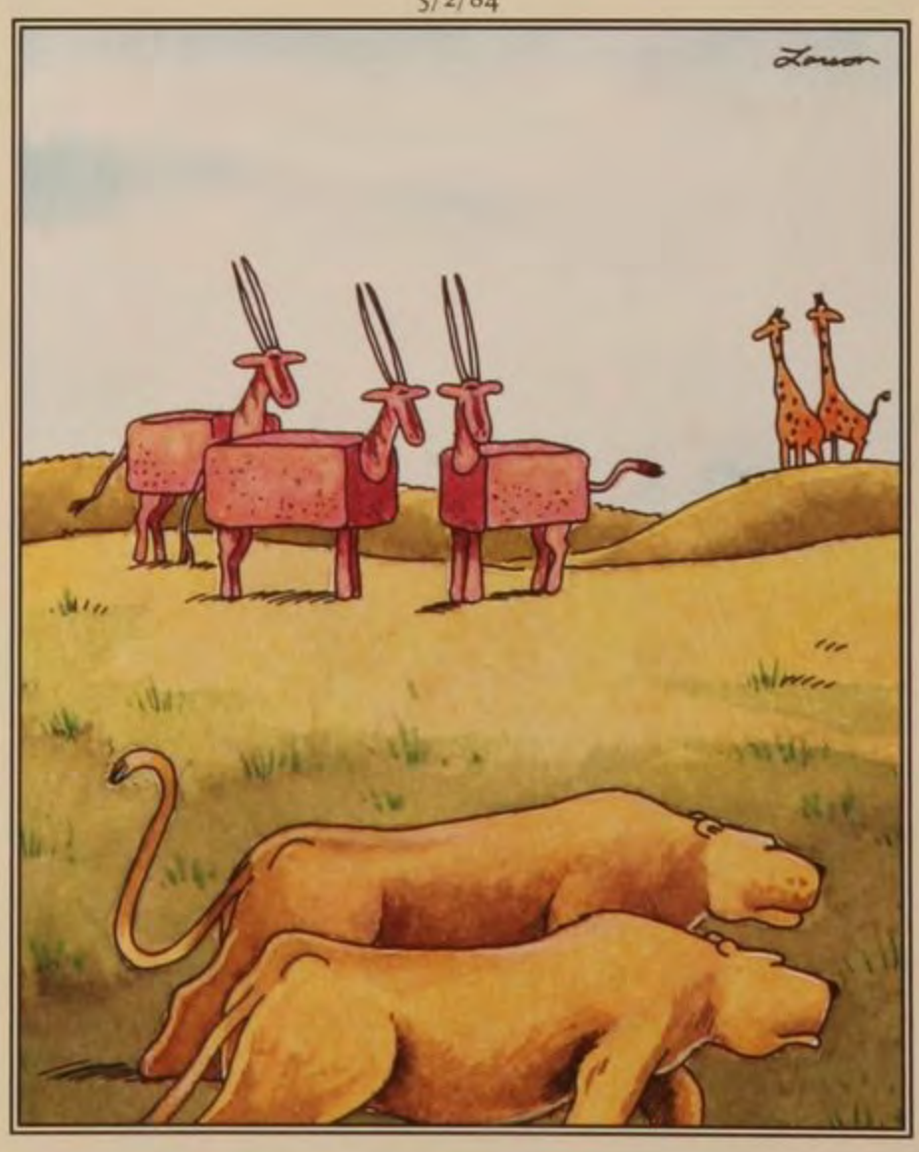
"You know what I'm sayin'? ... Me, for example. I couldn't work in some stuffy little office. ... The outdoors just calls to me."

5/1/84



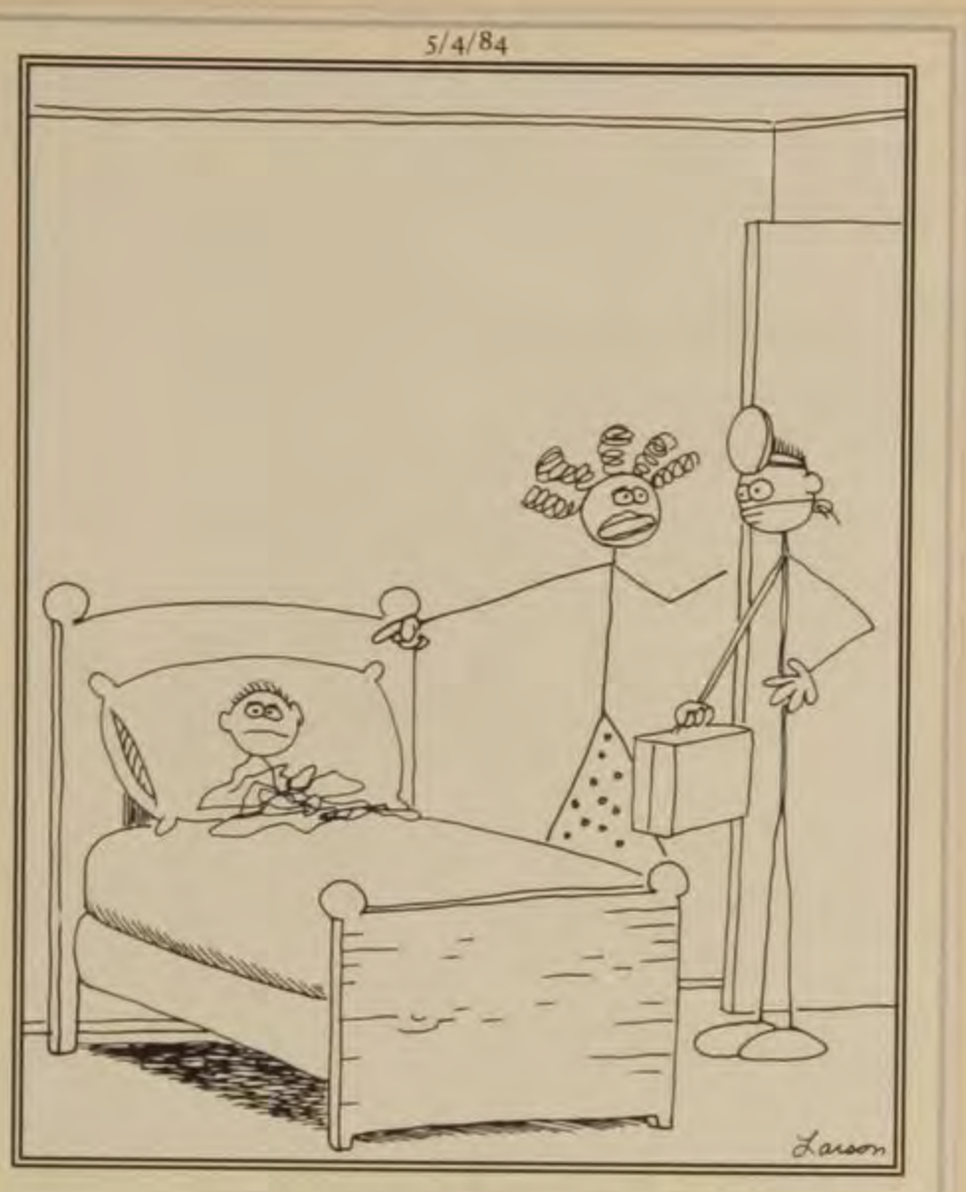
Early Pleistocene mermaids

5/2/84



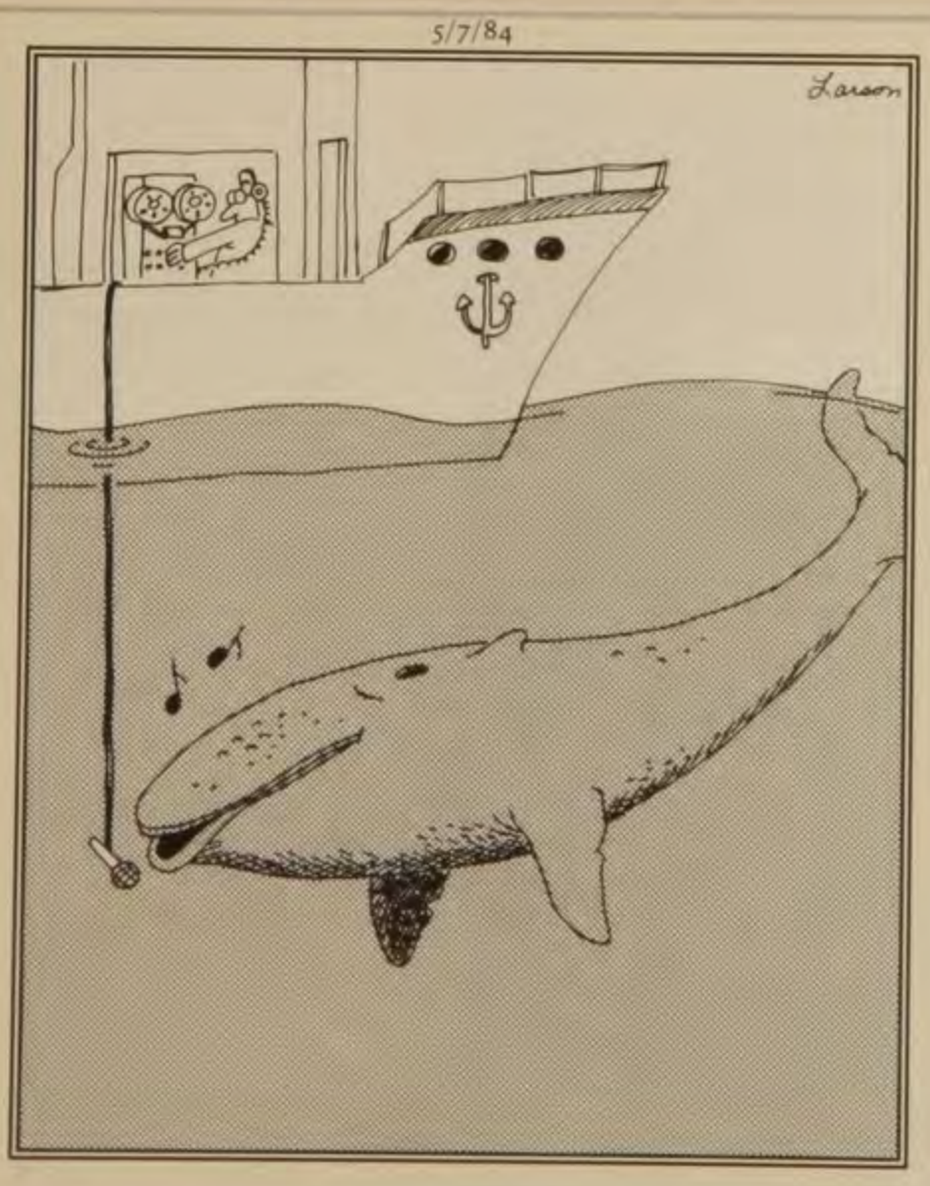
Knowing the lion's preference for red meat, the spamalopes remained calm but wary.

May 1984



"Thank goodness you're here, Doctor! ... I came in this morning and found Billy just all scribbled like this!"

The Boy Who Cried "No Brakes"



"A Louie, Louie ... wowoooo ... we gotta go now ..."

"I've never been so embarrassed. ... After dinner, you just never gave up trying to cram the world into your cheek pouches!"

May 1984

"CANNONBAAAAAAAALLLLLLLL!"

Grog Schwartz eats some bad beetle grubs,
and the art of dance is born.

"Don't rush me! Don't rush me! ... I've *always*
gotten my kangaroos and wallabies confused!"

"Okay! I'll talk! I'll talk! ... Take two sticks of
approximately equal size and weight—rub
them together at opposing angles using
short, brisk strokes ..."

5/8/84

Early vegetarians returning from the kill

5/10/84

"Ladies! Ladies! He's back! ... Our mystery man who does the Donald Duck impression!"

5/18/84

"Quit complaining and eat it! ... Number one, chicken soup is good for the flu, and number two, it's nobody we know."

May 1984

5/14/84

"So tell us, Buffy—for how long have you been a talking dog?"

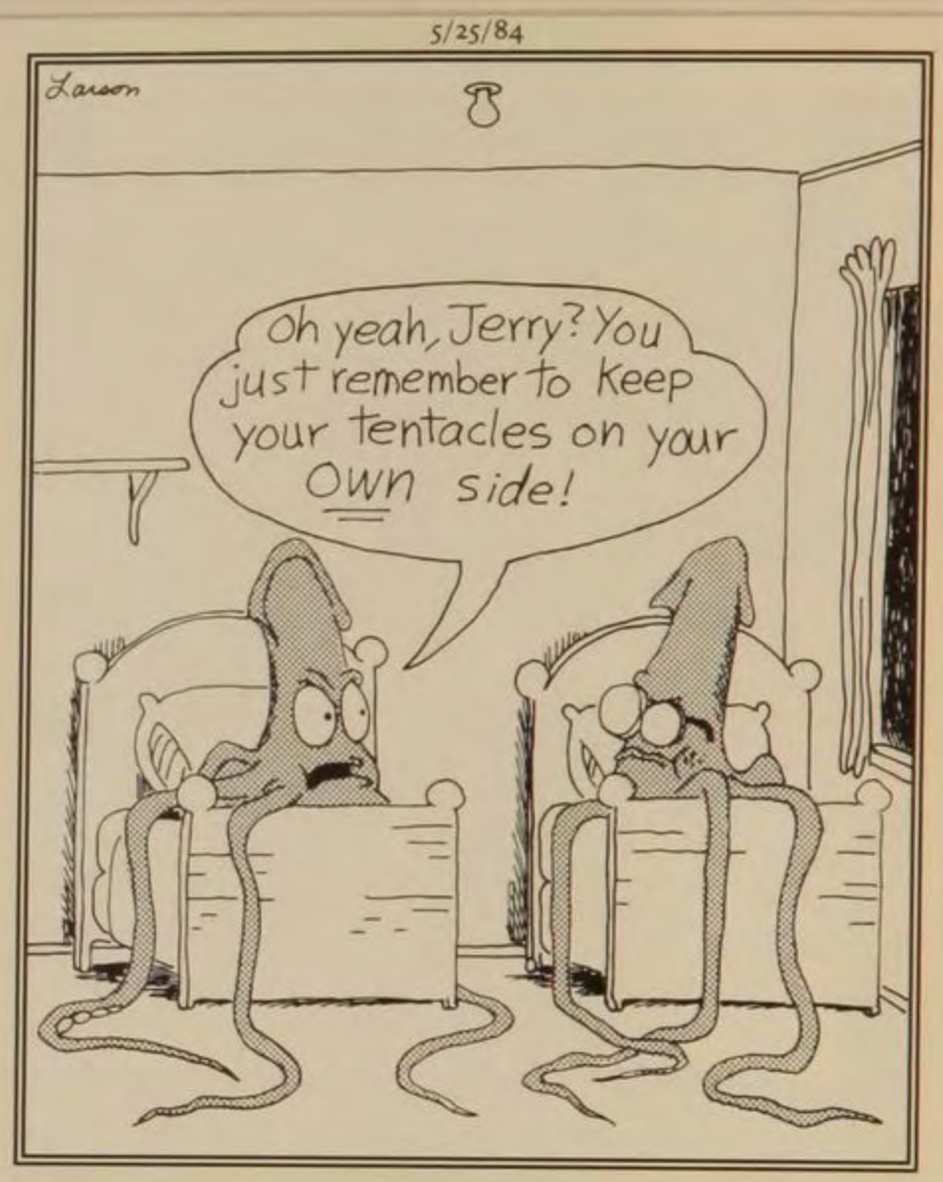
5/21/84

One day, as he nonchalantly reaches for a match, Leonardo da Vinci's life is suddenly transformed.

5/16/84

May 1984

"Well, more arrivals from the States, I see."



The Squid kids at home

"For heaven's sake, Elroy! *Now* look where the earth is! ... Move over and let me drive!"

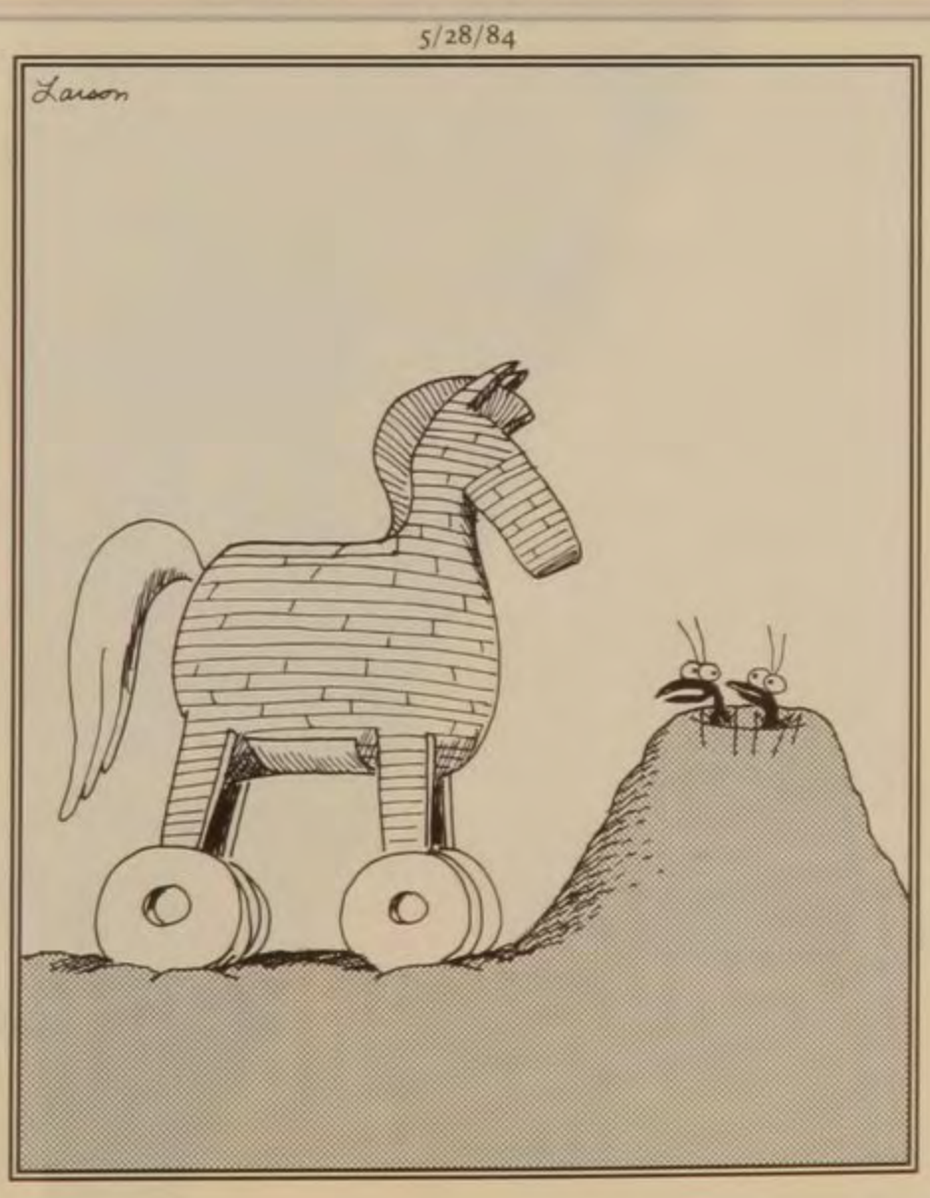
Dog Stooges

May 1984

5/29/84

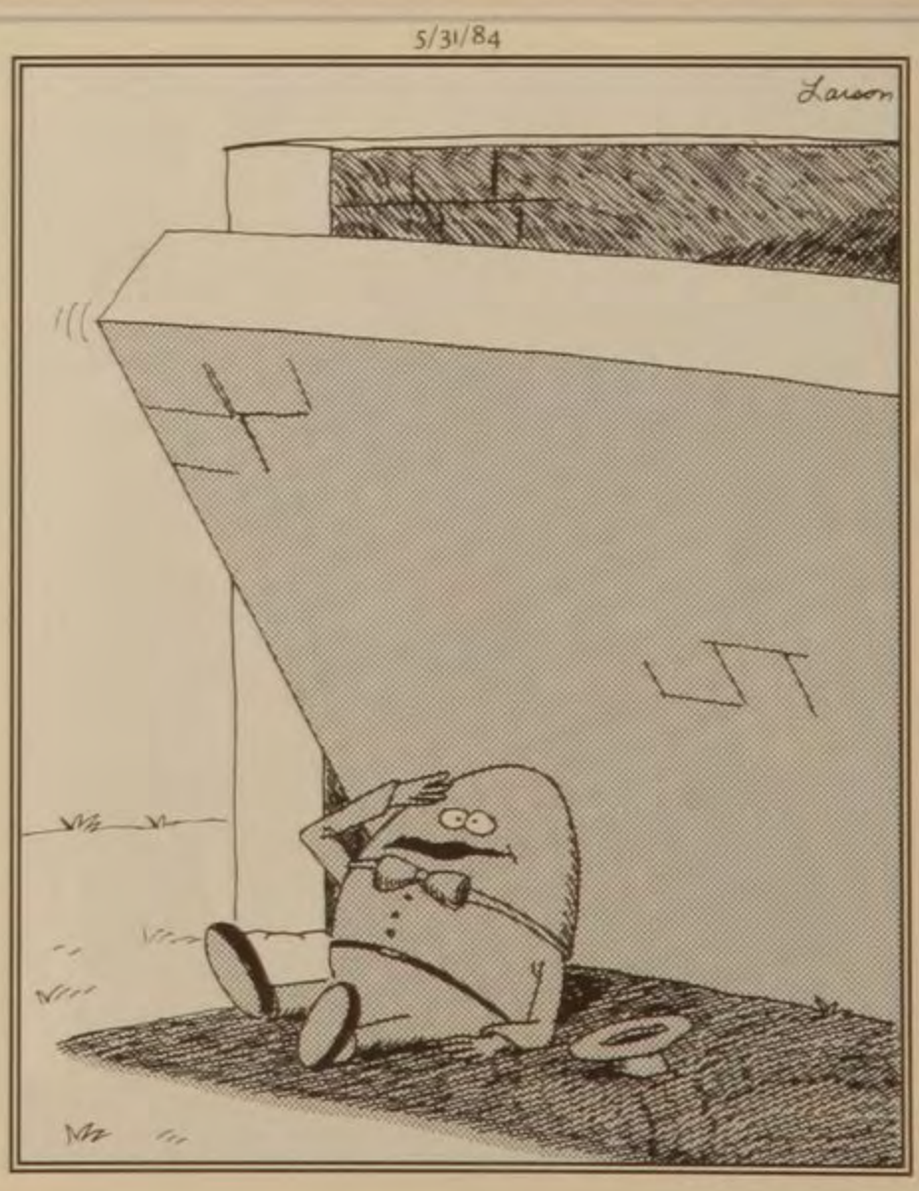
Hank knew this place well. He need only wait. ...
The deer would come, the deer would come.

5/28/84



"I don't know about this. ... The red ants never gave us anything before."

5/31/84



"Well, I'll be danged! ... I'm okay!"

May 1984

"Uh-uh-uh-uh-uh. ... Question. Can anyone here tell me what Hanson there is doing wrong with his elbows?"

"Now calm down there ma'am ... your cat's gonna be fine ... just fine."

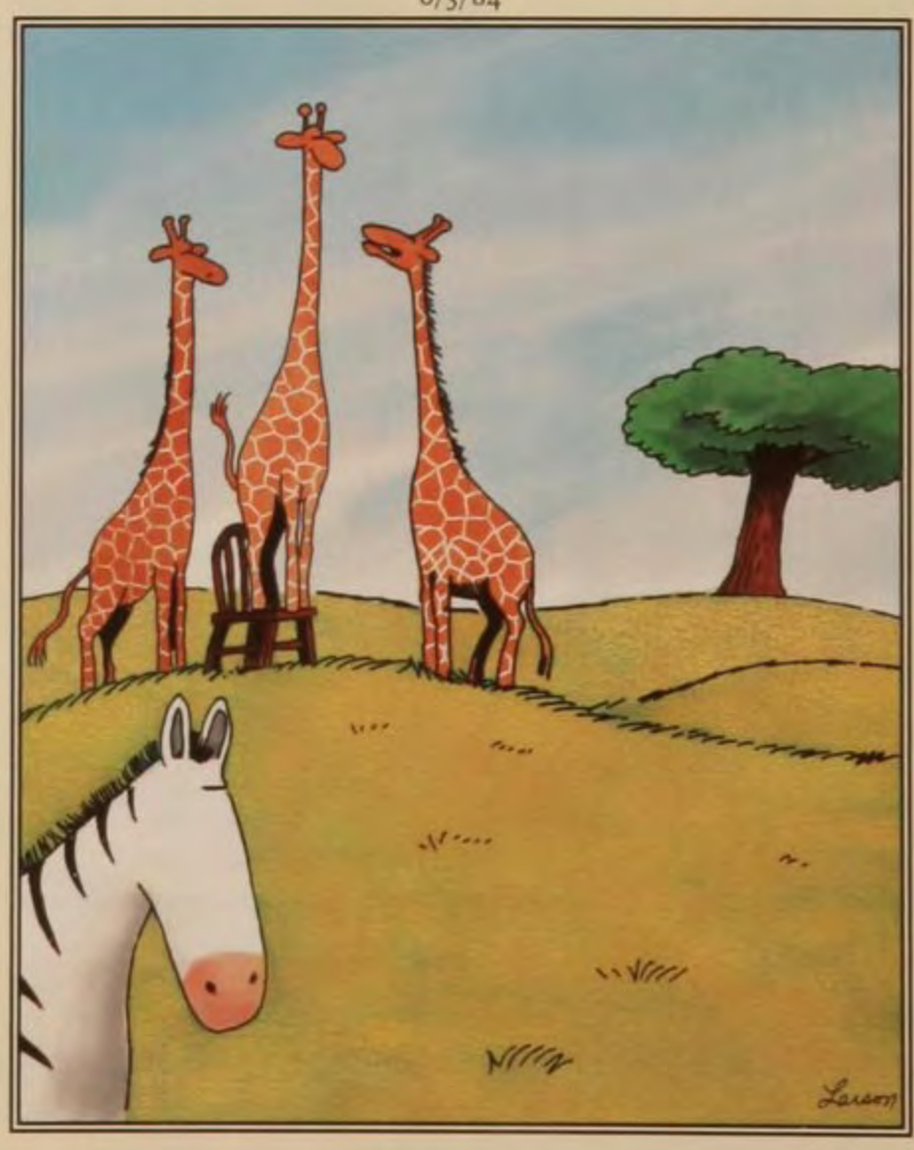
"I tell you she's drivin' me nuts! ... I come home at night and it's 'quack quack quack'... I get up in the morning and it's 'quack quack quack.'"

6/1/84

"Uh-oh."

6/4/84

6/5/84



"No lions anywhere? ... Let me have the chair."

June 1984

6/6/84

What dogs dream about

6/13/84

"Don't listen to him, George. He didn't catch it ... the stupid thing swerved to miss him and ran into a tree."

6/2/84

"Relax, Worthington. ... As the warm, moist air from the jungle enters the cave, the cool, denser air inside forces it to rise, resulting in turbulence that sounds not unlike heavy breathing."

6/8/84

Of course, the slugs worshipped their god out of fear, not love.

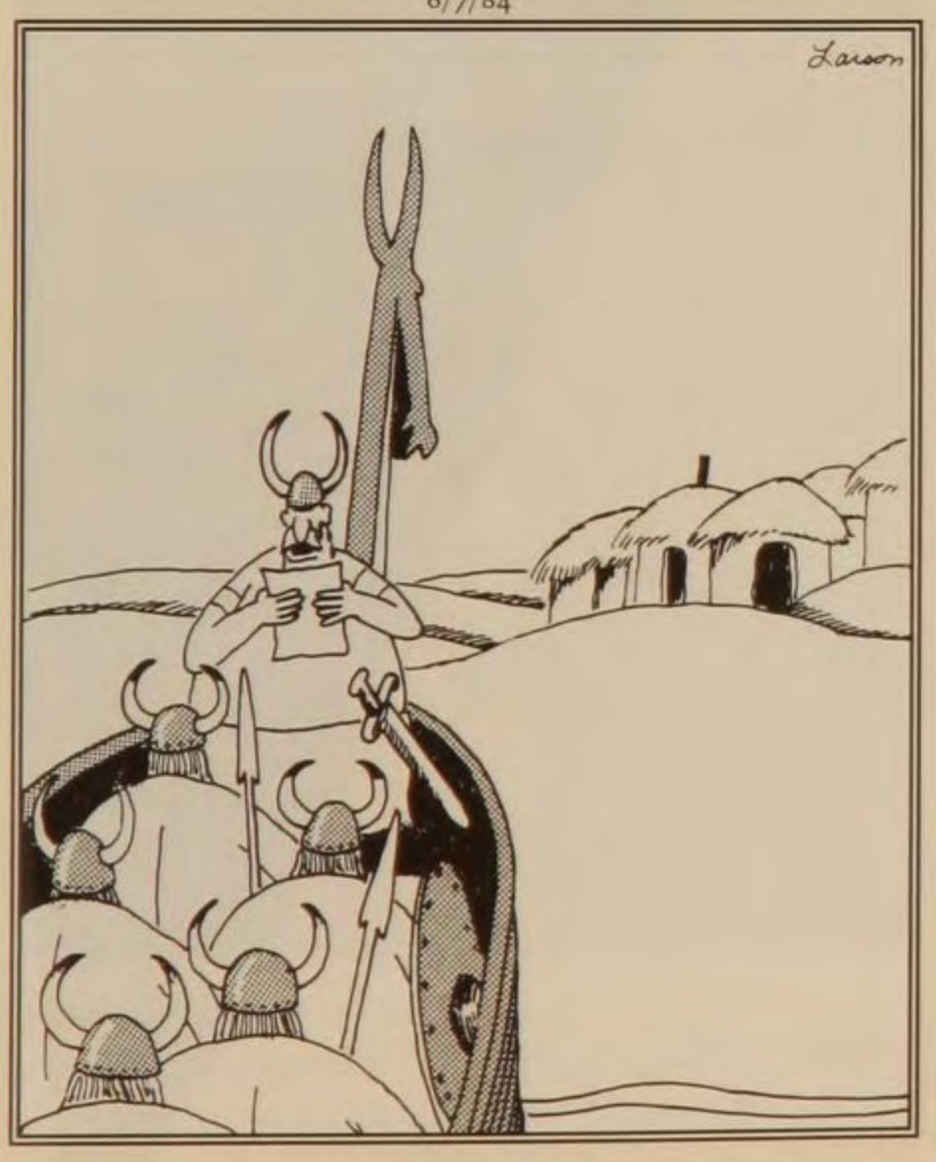
June 1984

6/14/84

"For crying out loud, Norm. Look at you ... I hope I don't look half as goony when I run."

6/15/84

6/7/84



"Okay, before you go, let me read this one more time: 'Burn the houses, eliminate the townsfolk, destroy the crops, plunder their gold!'... You knuckleheads think you can handle all that?"

6/9/84

"Well, you've got quite an infestation here, ma'am. ... I can't promise anything, but I imagine I can knock out some of the bigger nests."

June 1984

"Soup of the day is ready!"

Another sighting of the Loch Ness dog

"Oo! ... Here he comes to feed on the milk of the living."

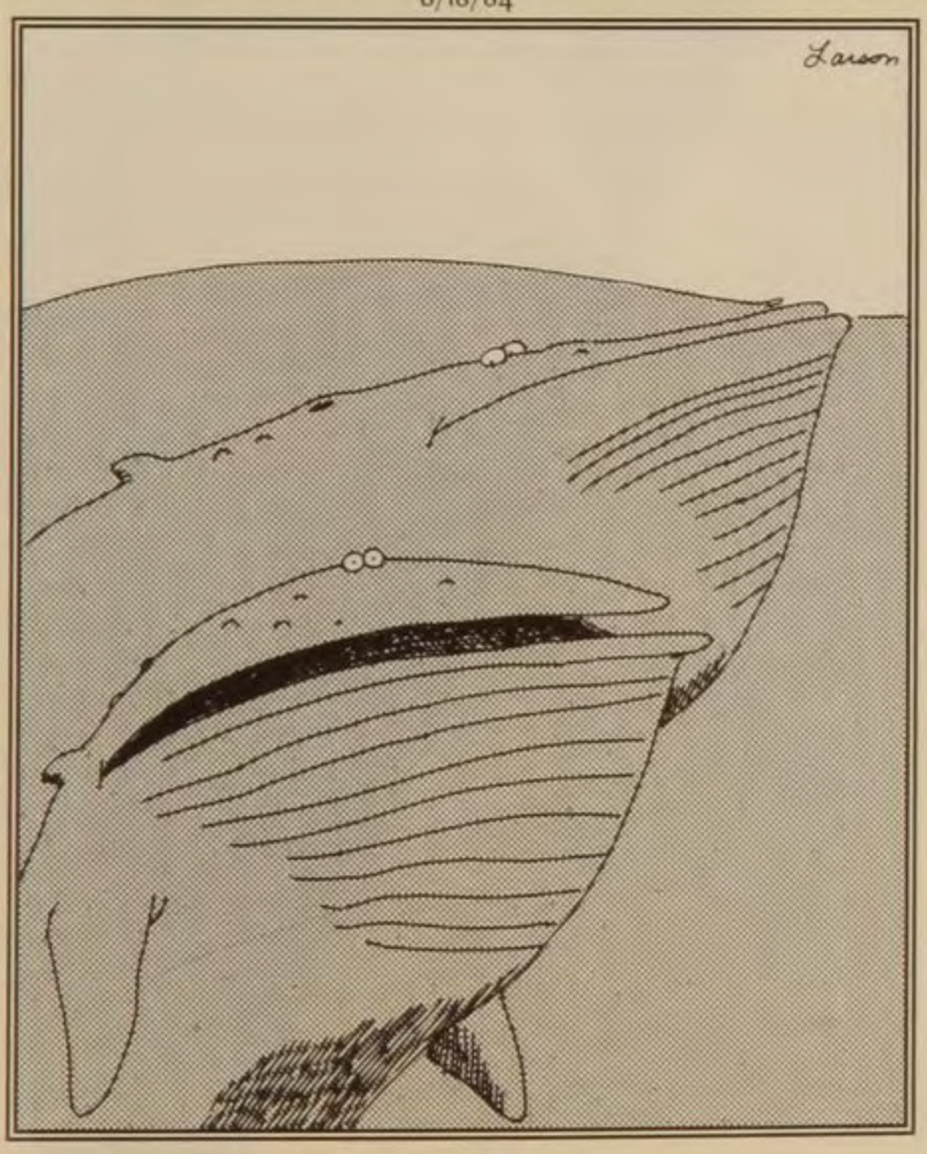
"Oh, hey! Fantastic party, Tricksy! Fantastic! ... Say, do you mind telling me which way to the yard?"

June 1984

6/25/84

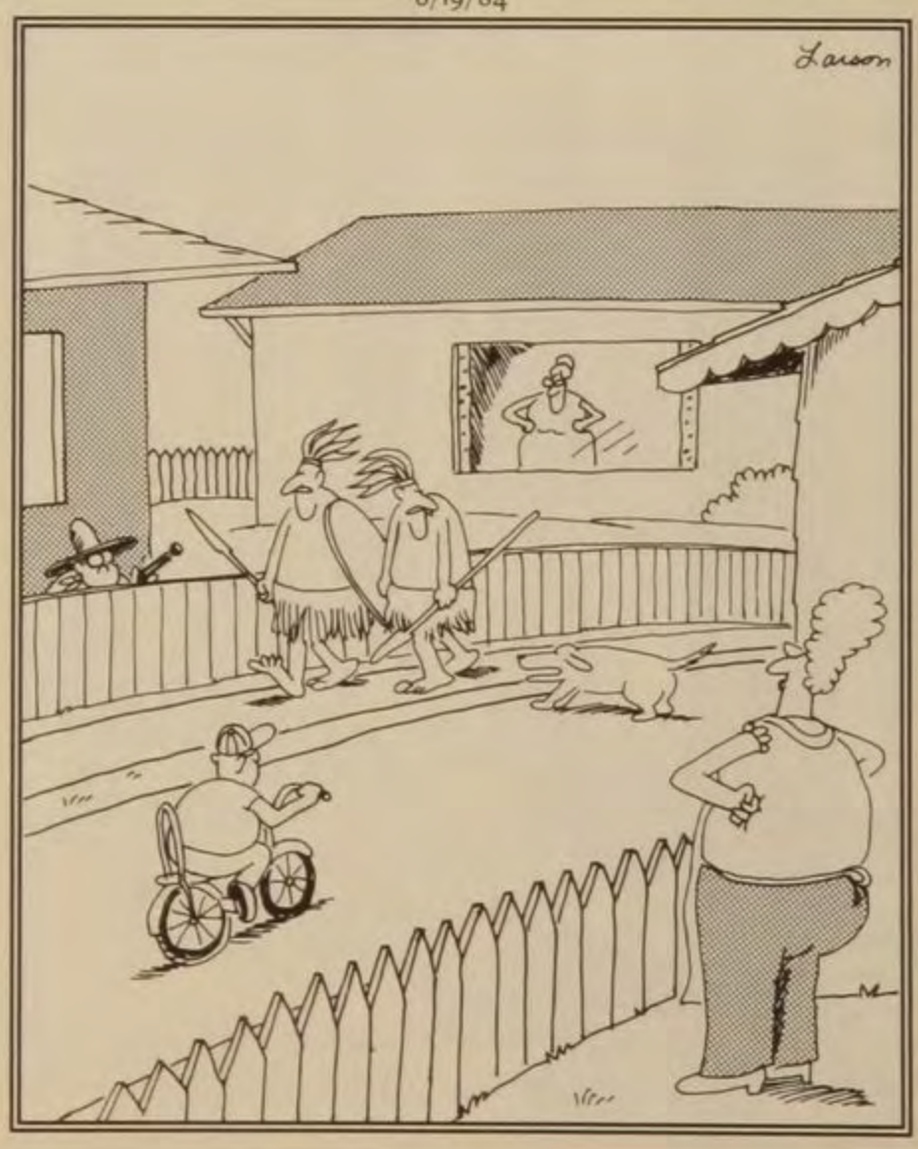
"FIRE!"

6/18/84



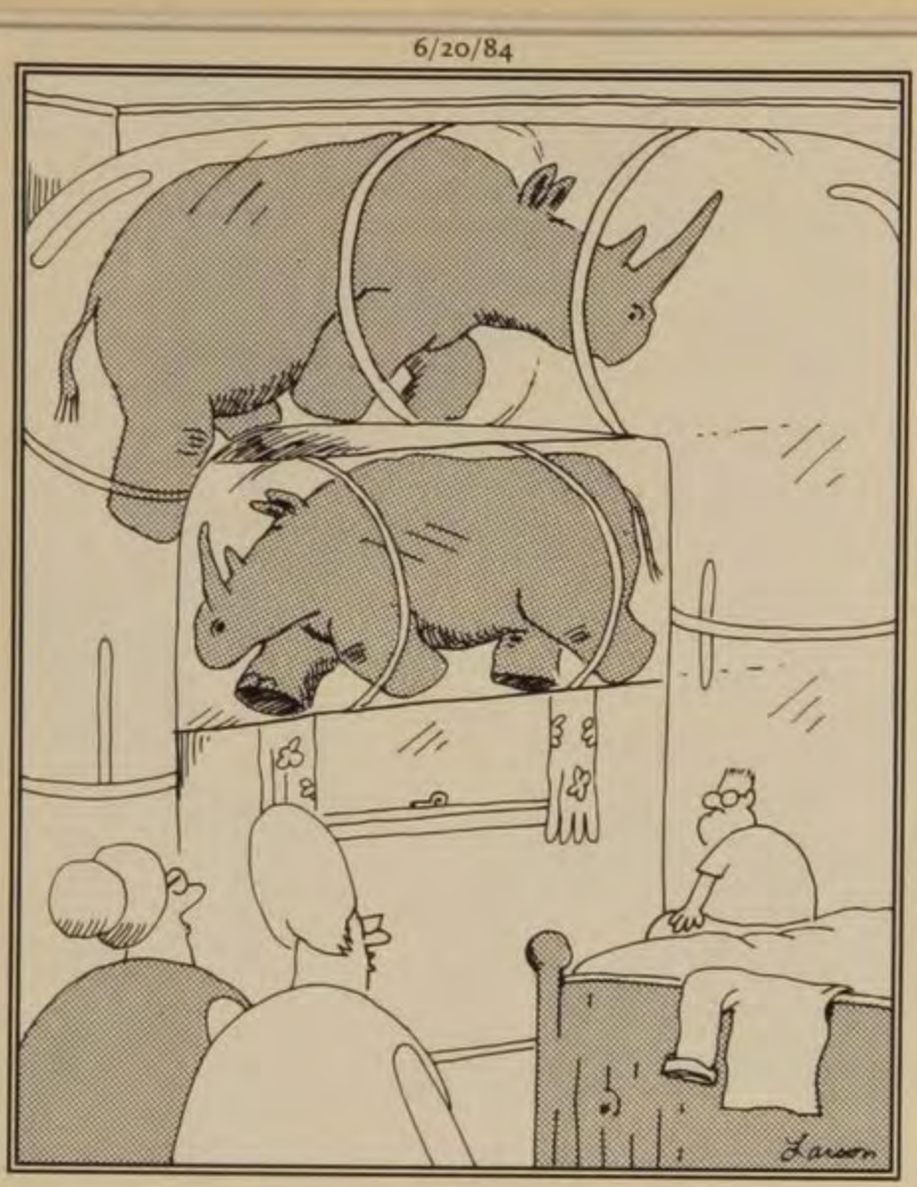
"Oo! Icky icky! ... Something just went down that surrrrrrre wasn't plankton!"

6/19/84

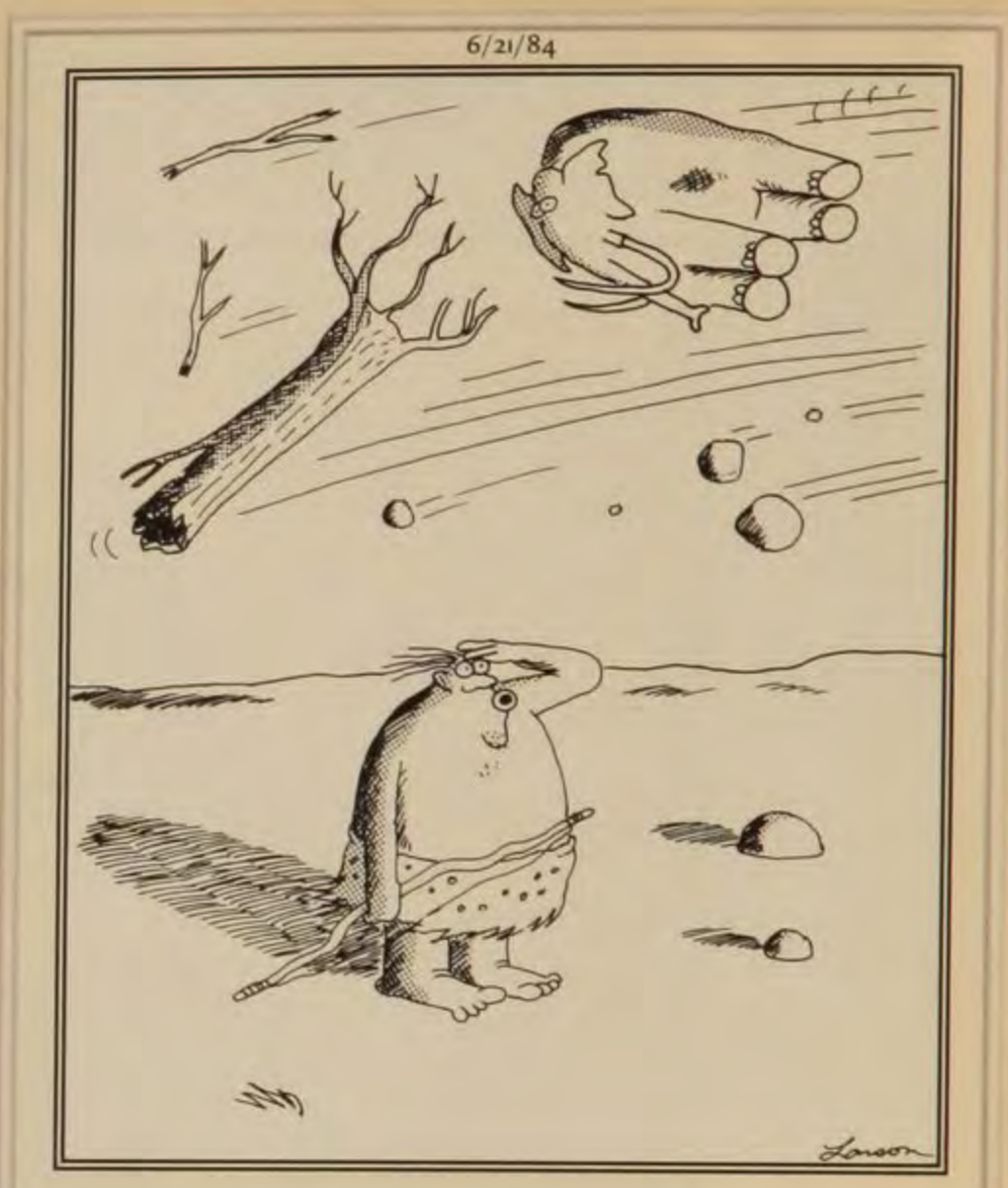


Lost in the suburbs, Tonga and Zootho wander for days—plagued by dogs, kids, and protective mothers.

June 1984



"Dennis, do you mind if Mrs. Carlisle comes in and sees your rhino tube-farm?"



The first cruise arrow is tested.

The mysterious intuition of some animals

"Okay, Wellington. I'm comfortable with my grip if you are. ... Have you made a wish?"

June 1984

"Oh, give me a home, where the buffalo roam ..."

Goaded on by their respective gangs, the leaders of the Hamster Demons and the Parakeet Devils square off.

Dreaming he's falling, Jerry forgets the well-known "always-wake-up-before-you-land" rule.

Testing whether laughter *is* the best medicine.

July 1984

"Well no *wonder!* ... It's plugged in! ... And I thought I was going nuts!"

"Uh-oh, Ruby. ... The apartment downstairs is awfully quiet."

Jungle apparel

July 1984

7/6/84

At night, the forest custodians would arrive—sometimes stopping work to laugh and gossip about the habits of certain daytime animals.

7/7/84

"Well, thank goodness we all made it to the surface. ... You and your damn smoking in bed!"

7/4/84

"I hate this place."

July 1984

7/9/84

7/10/84

"Anthropologists! Anthropologists!"

7/11/84

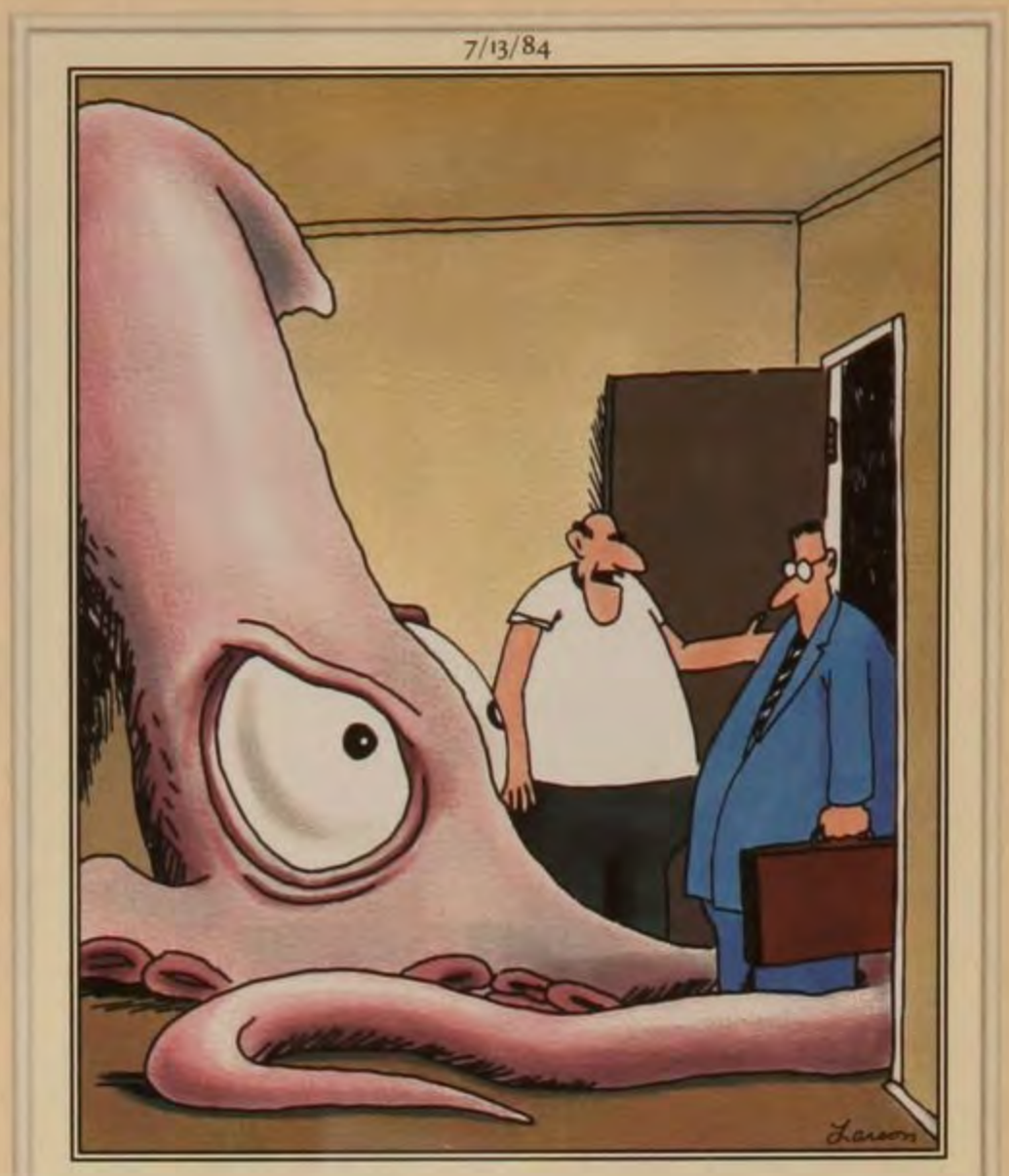
When imprinting studies go awry

7/14/84

"Of all the luck! ... Are you sure it's in four-wheel drive, Saunders?"

July 1984

"Hey! ... Six eyes!"



"Oh, no, he's quite harmless. ... Just don't show any fear. Squids can sense fear."

"What the? ... How'd that thing get out on the field?"

Natural selection at work

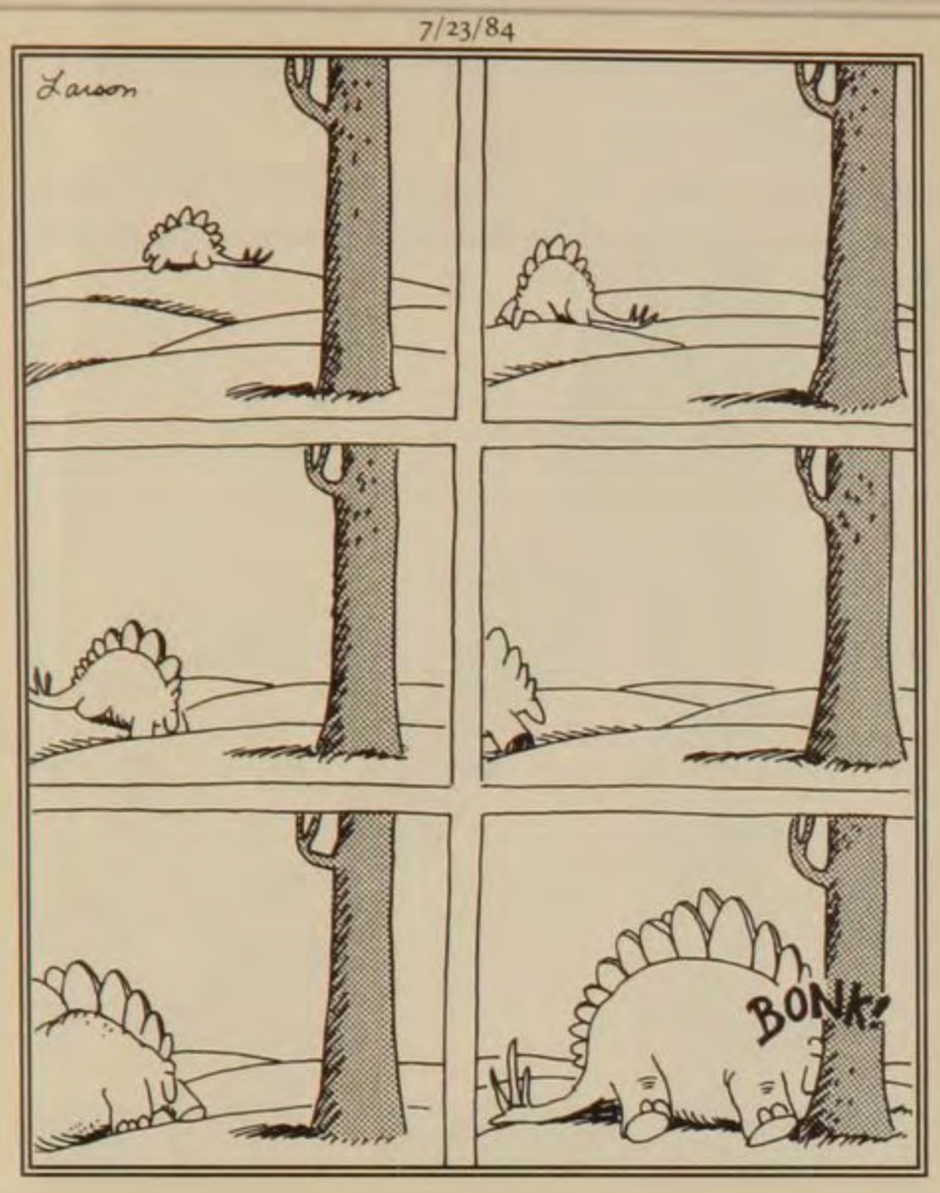
July 1984

"Well, she's done it to me again ... Tuna fish!"

"Play him, Sidney! Play him! ... Ooooooooweeeeee! ... It's gonna be fresh burgers tonight!"

"That's the third one you've lost this month, Edgar. ... You've got to stop believing these guys who say they're just stepping out to use the restroom."

July 1984



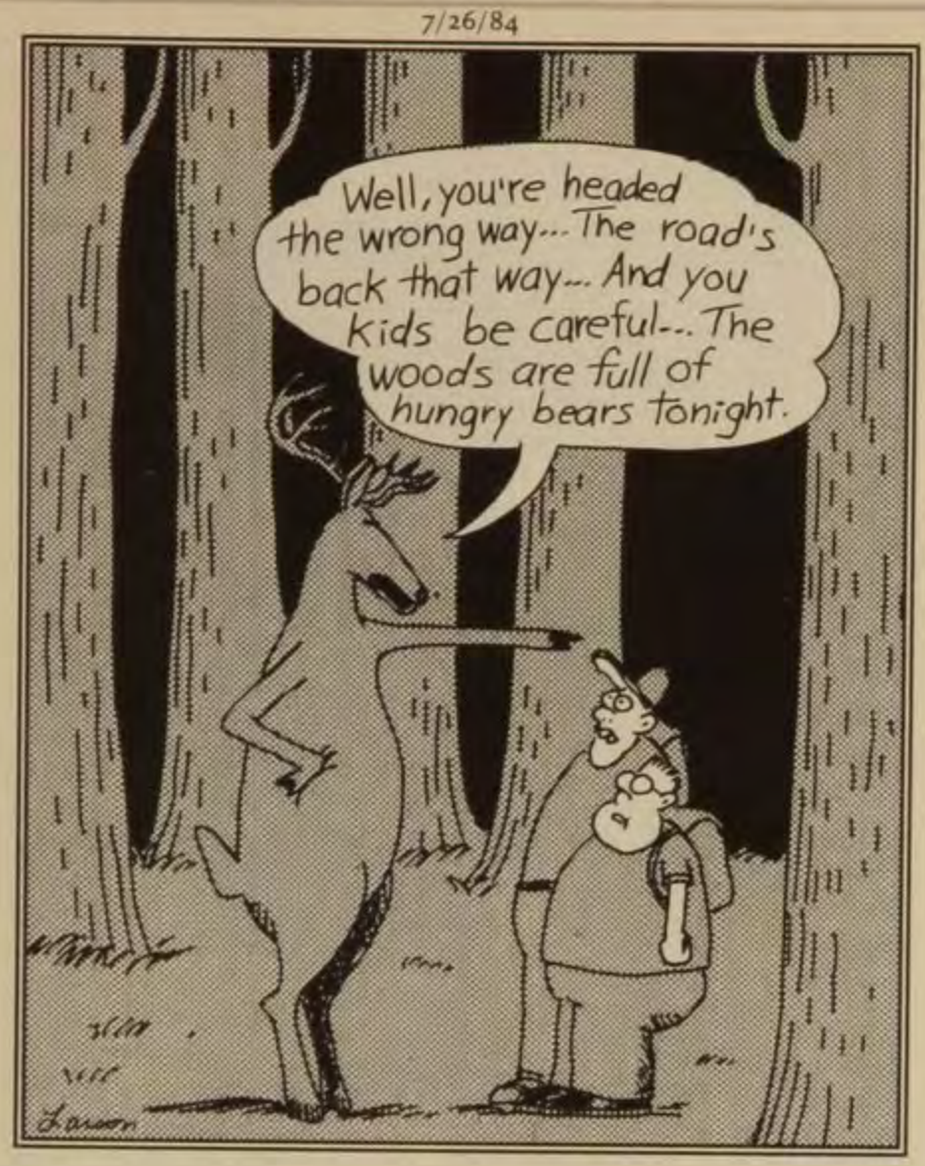
Dinosaur cranial capacity

Animal lures

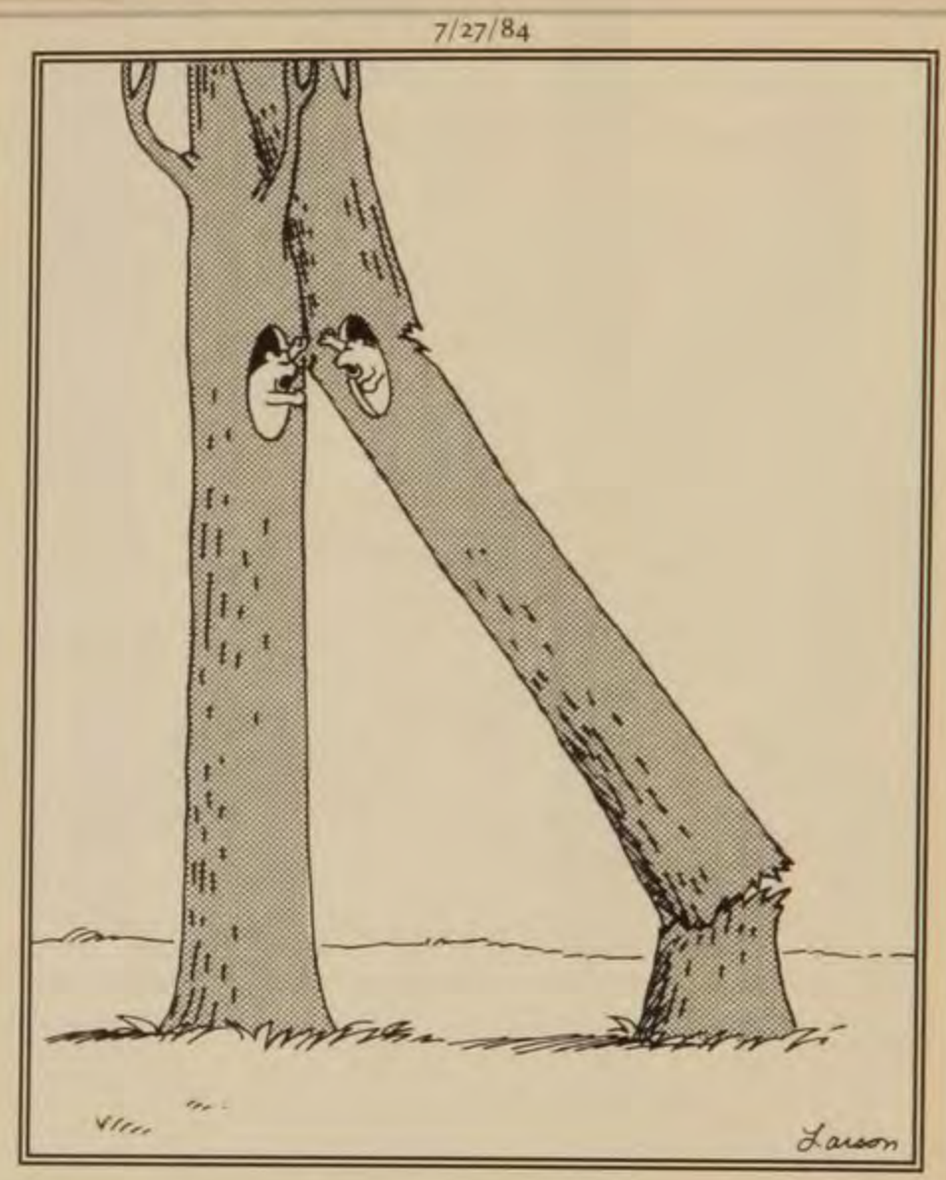
"You know, it's really dumb to keep this right next to the cereal. ... In fact, I don't know why we even keep this stuff around in the first place."

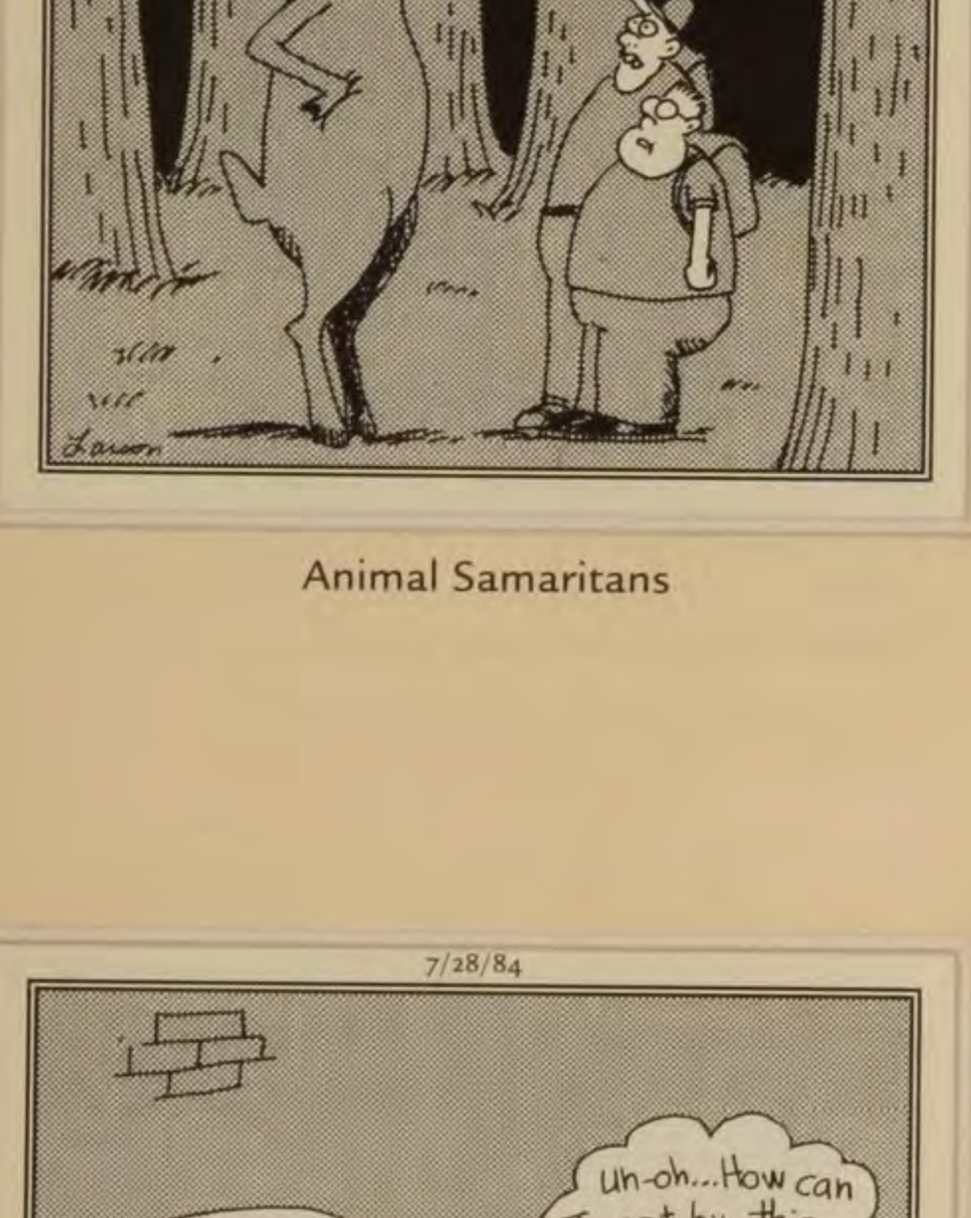
"Hey, you stupid bovines! You'll never get that contraption off the ground! ... Think it'll run on hay? ... Say, maybe you'll make it to the mooooooooon! ..."

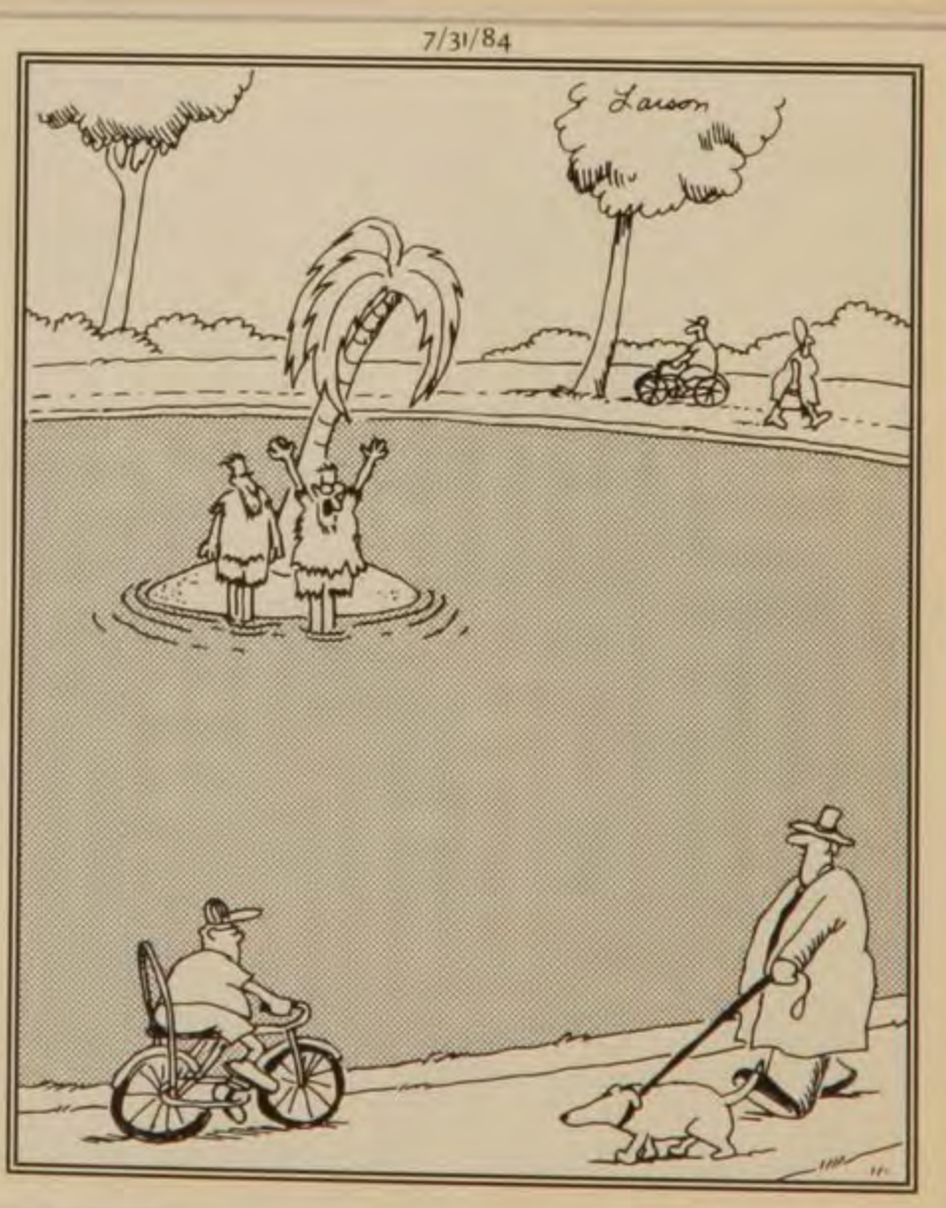
July 1984



Animal Samaritans







"Yes! Yes! This is it, Sidney! The guy with the dog! ... I think he sees us!"

August 1984

8/1/84

Larson

"Couldn't resist, could you, Farnsworth! ... Just *had* to reach up and honk the chief's nose!"

8/2/84

Larson

Social manners

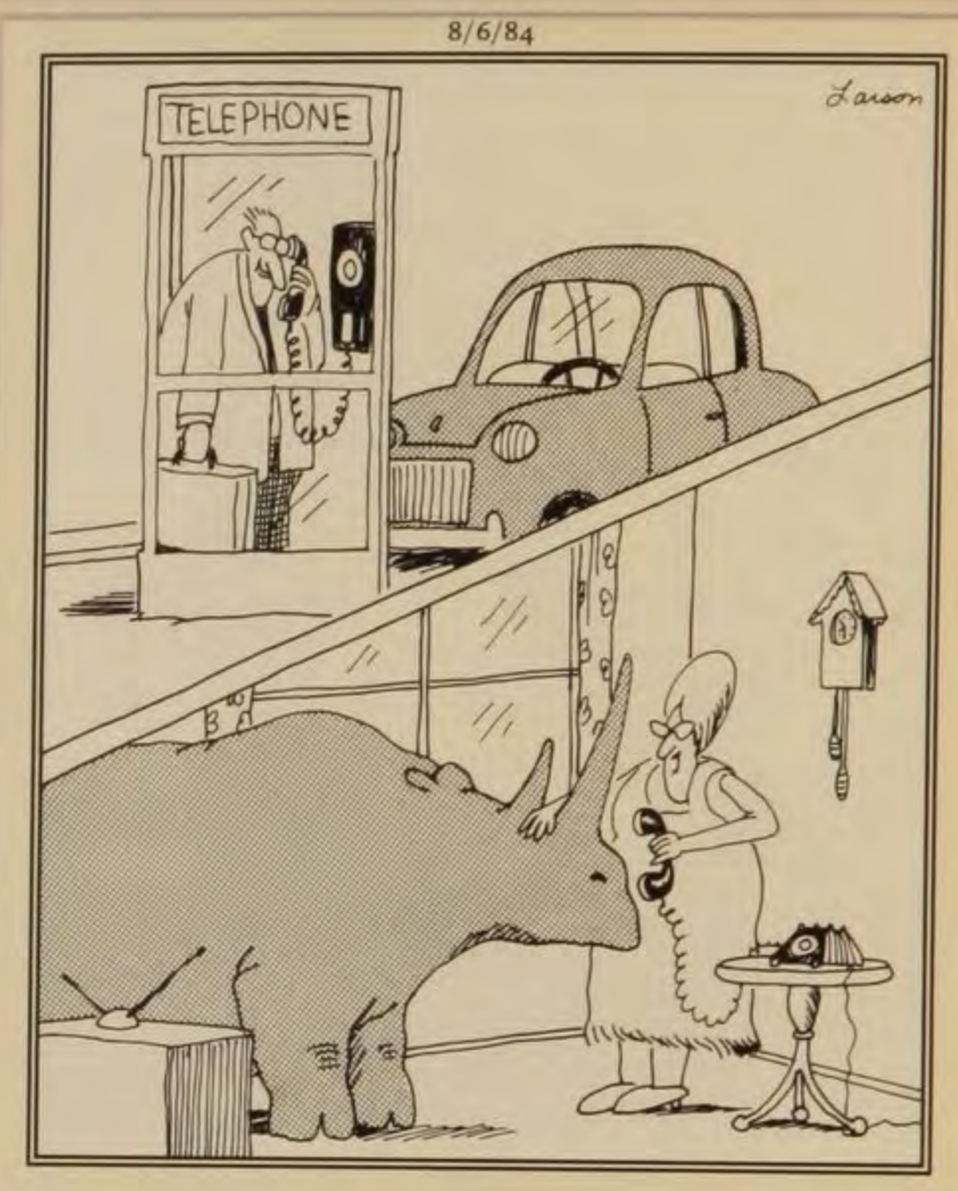
8/3/84

"They say they're not making any deals until they're sure the animals are okay."

8/4/84

August 1984

"Now, this is a typical dwelling of a species that ... Hey! All right! I think we even caught the little fellow at home!"



"Come on, baby ... one grunt for Daddy ... one grunt for Daddy."

And then, the dawn was still once more— another miracle of Nature had emerged.

Visiting the Petrified City

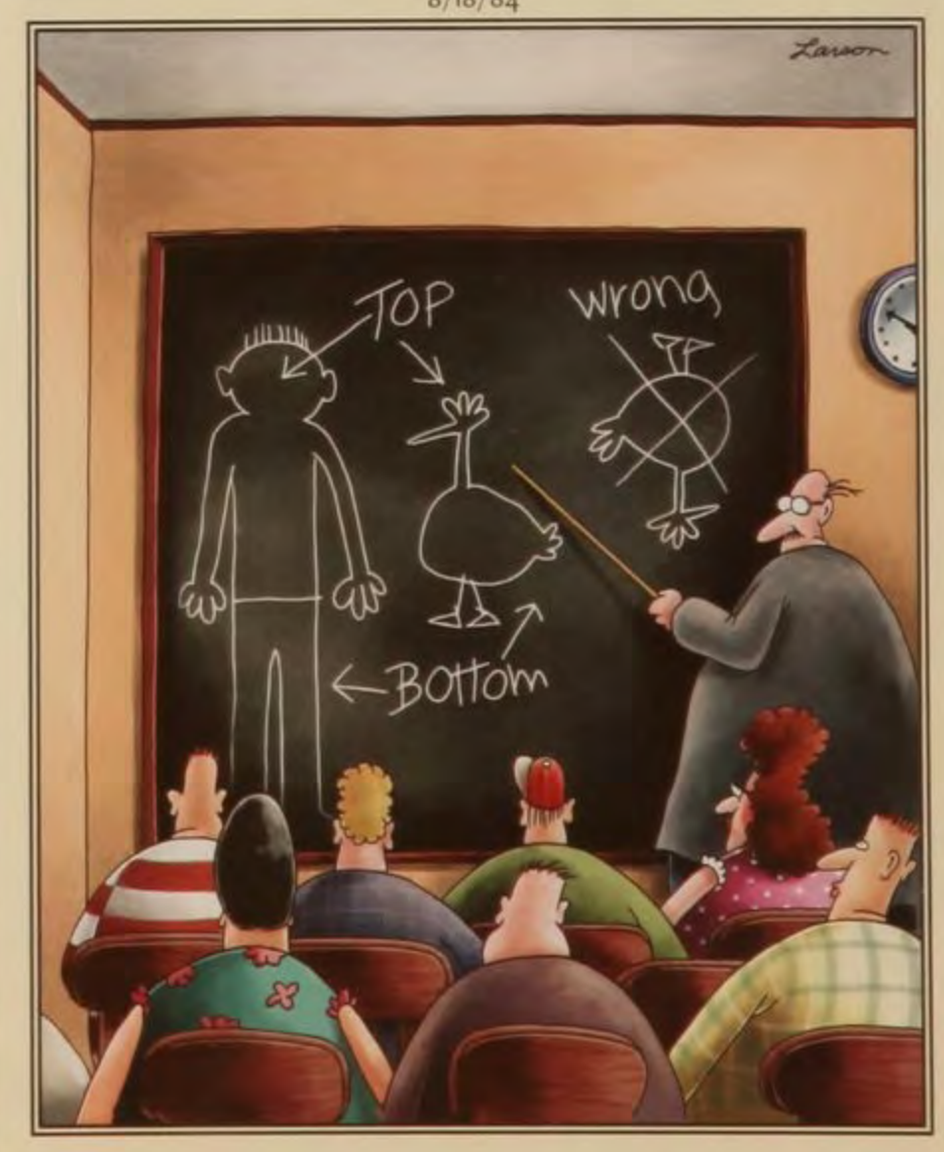
August 1984

8/7/84

In the animal self-help section

8/14/84

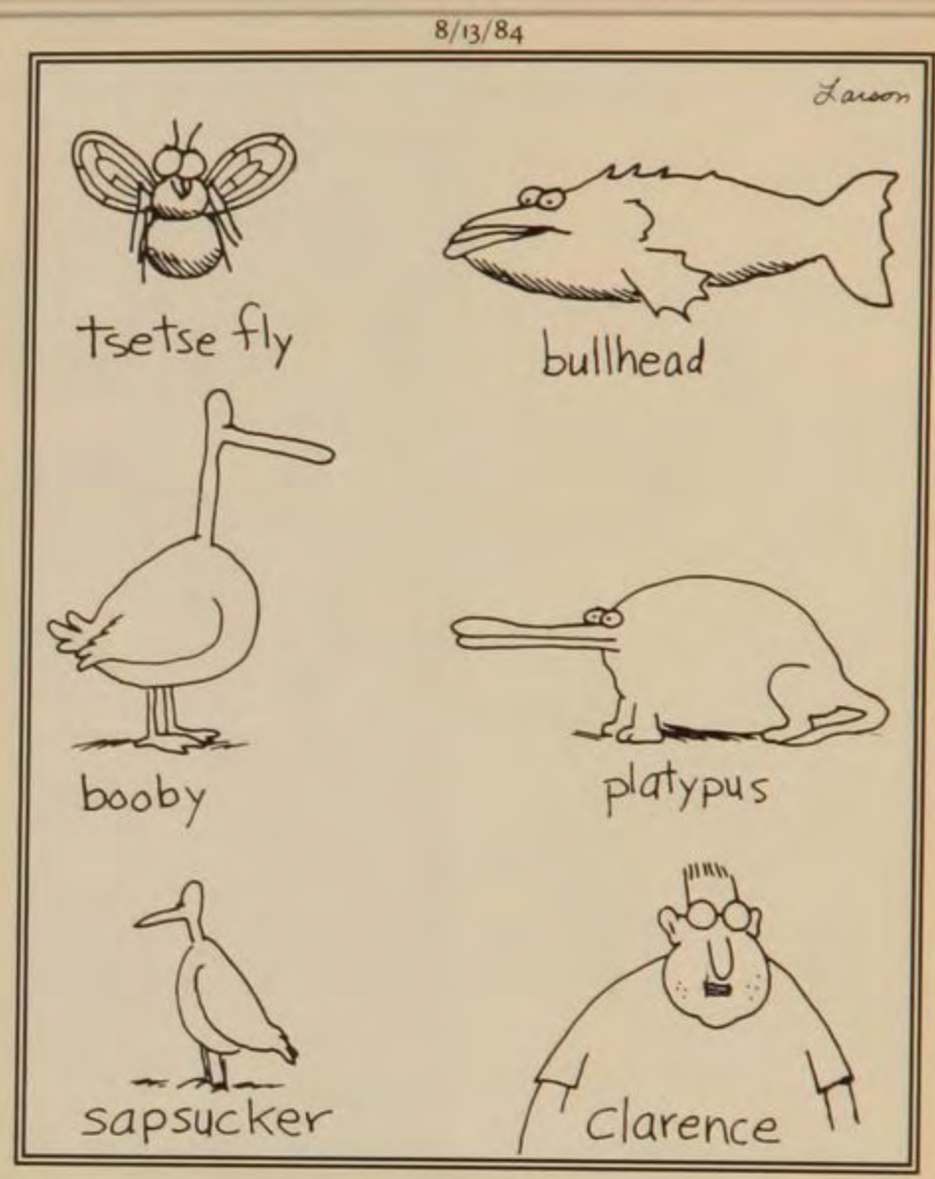
8/18/84



People who don't know which end is up

August 1984

Early musical chairs



Unfair animal names

Harvesting the work of ketchup bees

"Well, I beg your pardon ... but where I come from, it's considered a compliment to let fly with a good trumpeting after dinner."

August 1984

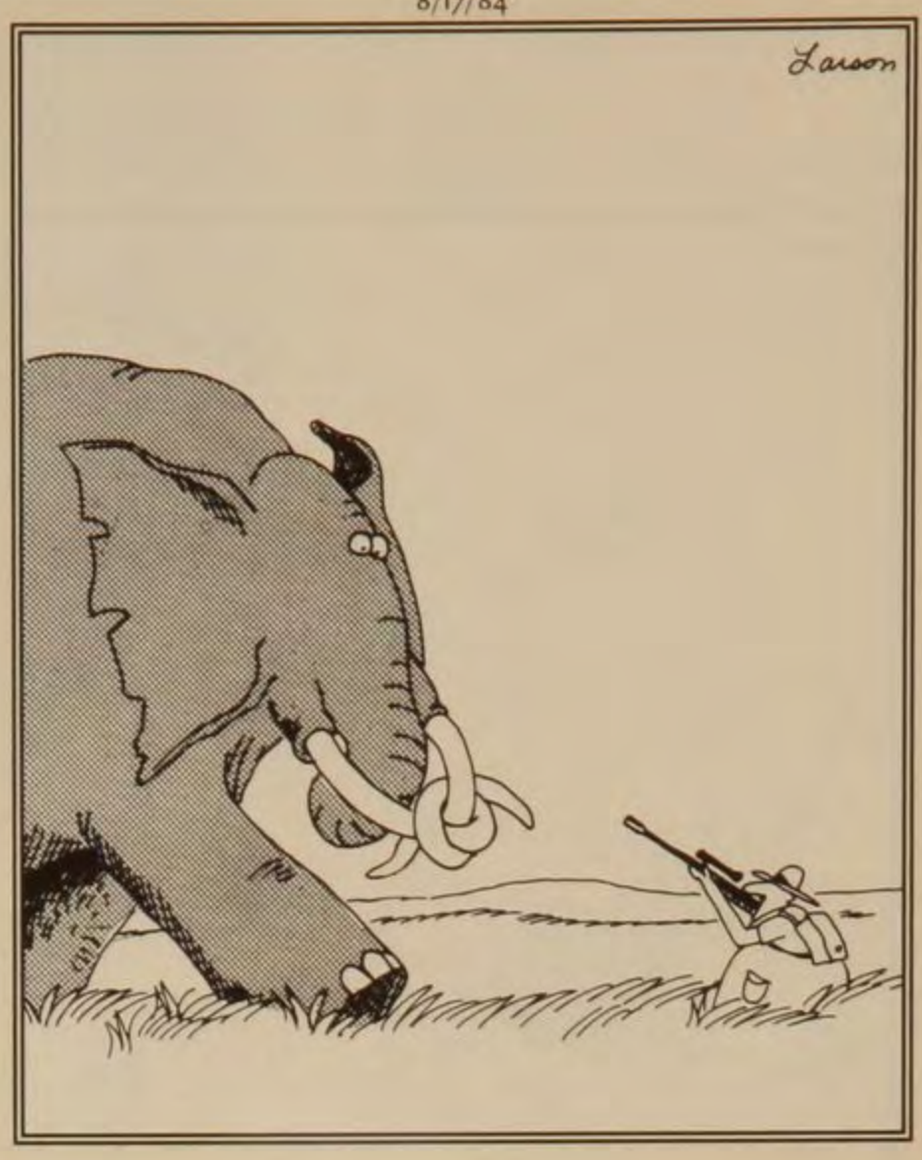
8/15/84

Larson

Returning from vacation, Roy and Barbara find their house, their neighborhood, their friends—in fact, all of Atlantis is just plain gone.

8/17/84

Larson



Suddenly, his worst fears realized, the old fellow's tusks jammed.

8/24/84

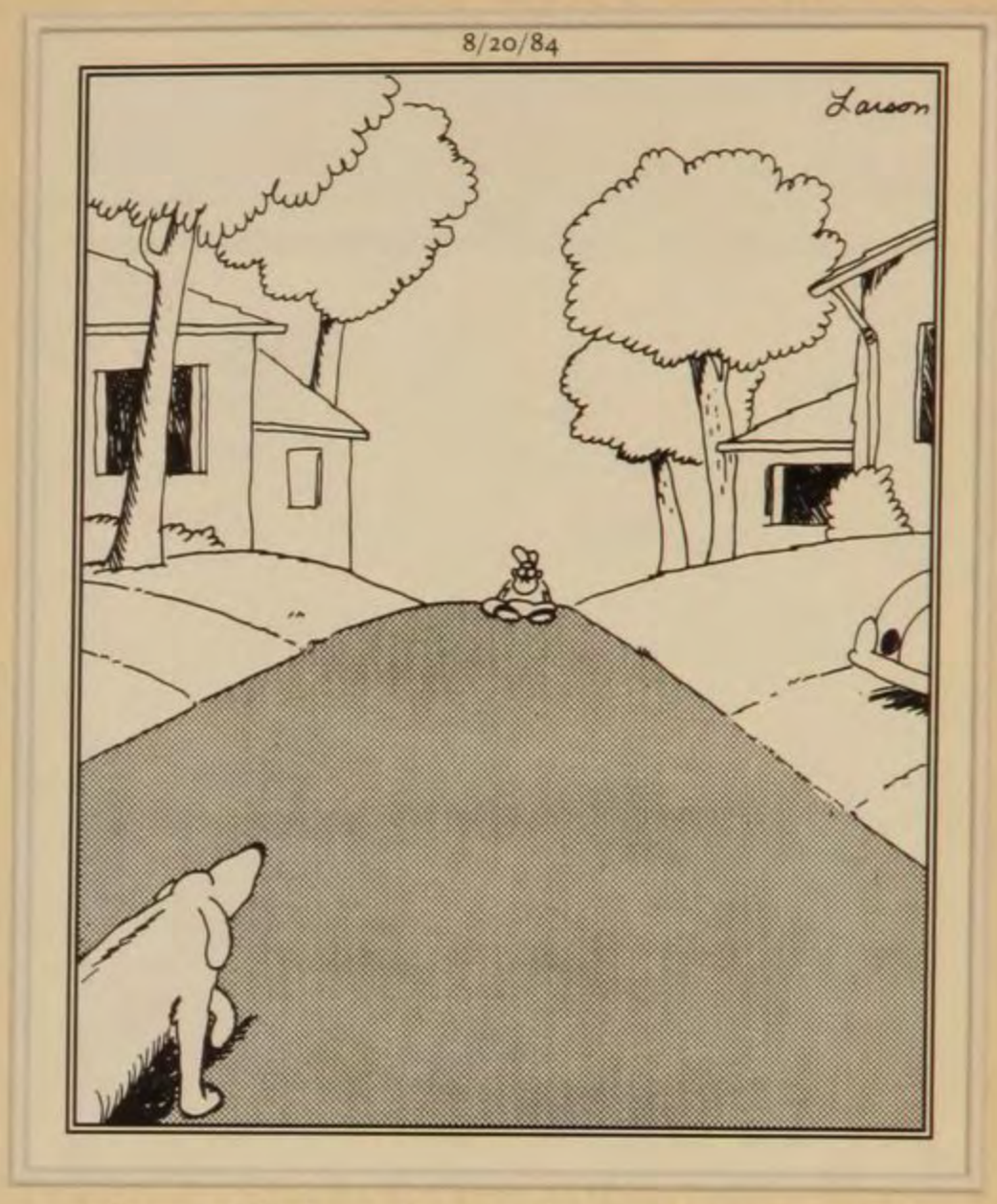
Larson

"No gophers, Stuart. ... But there's an old garden rake of yours down here."

8/25/84

August 1984

Mermaid evolution



After a full day of carousing and raising Cain in the neighborhood, Old Jake could count on a familiar sight to greet him.

"Oo! Grog run into a ... a ... dang! Now which kind stick up and which kind hang down?"

August 1984

8/27/84

"My word, Frank—sounds like you're coming down with one heck of a cold."

8/23/84

8/30/84

Someone for everyone

8/31/84

"Let's move it, folks. ... Nothing to see here. ... It's all over. ... Move it along, folks. ... Let's go, let's go ..."

September 1984

Fly heaven

Her tentacles swaying seductively in the breeze, the Venus Kidtrap was again poised and ready.

"Egad! It's those weird possums from across town! ... Everyone fake like you're dead."

"Dang! The radio's been ripped off again."

September 1984

9/6/84

Suddenly, Bobby felt very alone in the world.

9/12/84

The young dog's nightmare: premature mange

9/8/84

Unfortunately, Larry had always approached from the side that wasn't posted, and a natural phenomenon was destroyed before anyone could react.

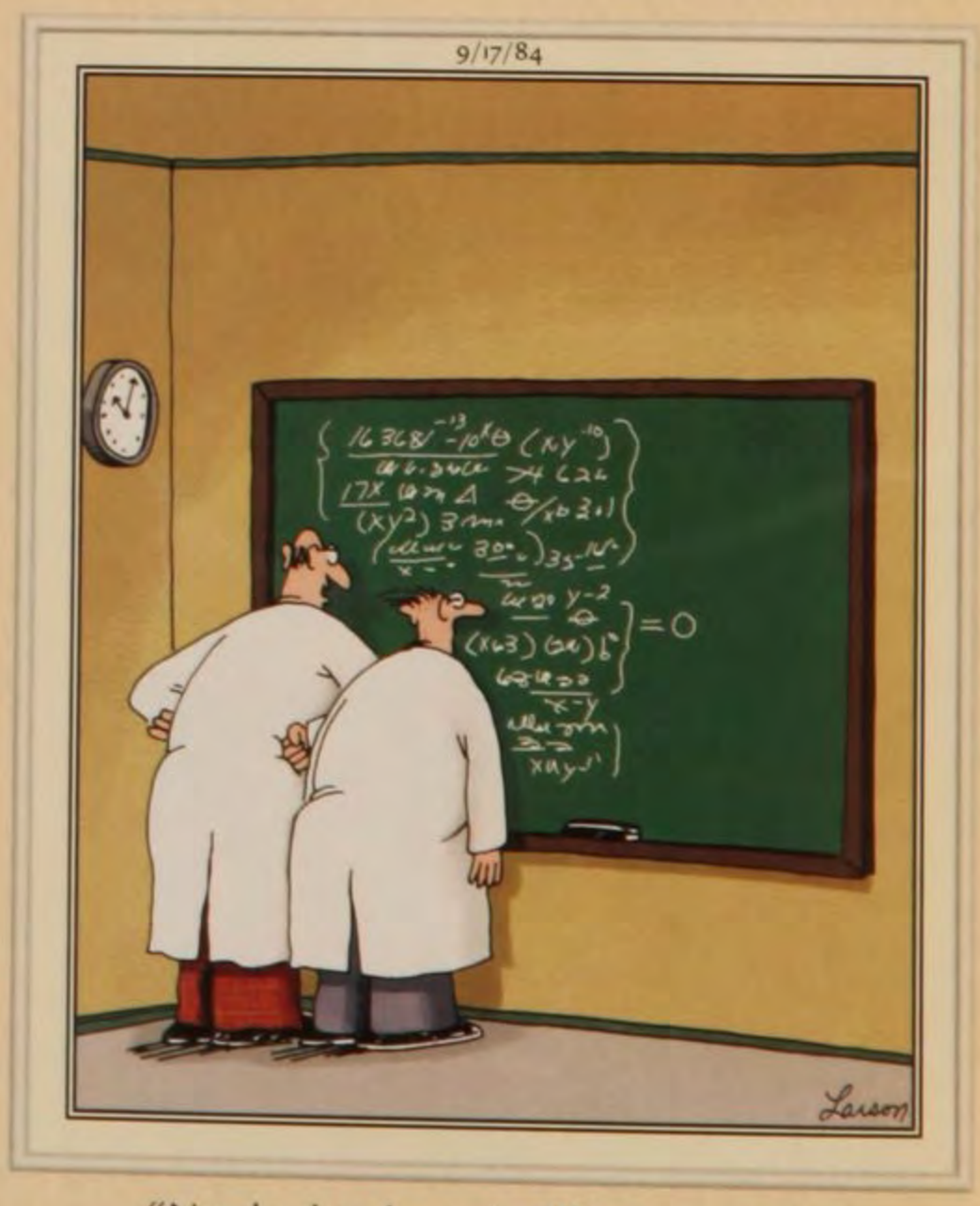
9/11/84

"Well, that cat's doing it again—keeping that poor thing alive just to play with it awhile."

September 1984

"Oh, quit worrying about it, Andrew. They're just love handles."

"Yes! That's right! The answer *is* 'Wisconsin'! Another 50 points for God, and ... uh-oh, looks like Norman, our current champion, hasn't even scored yet."



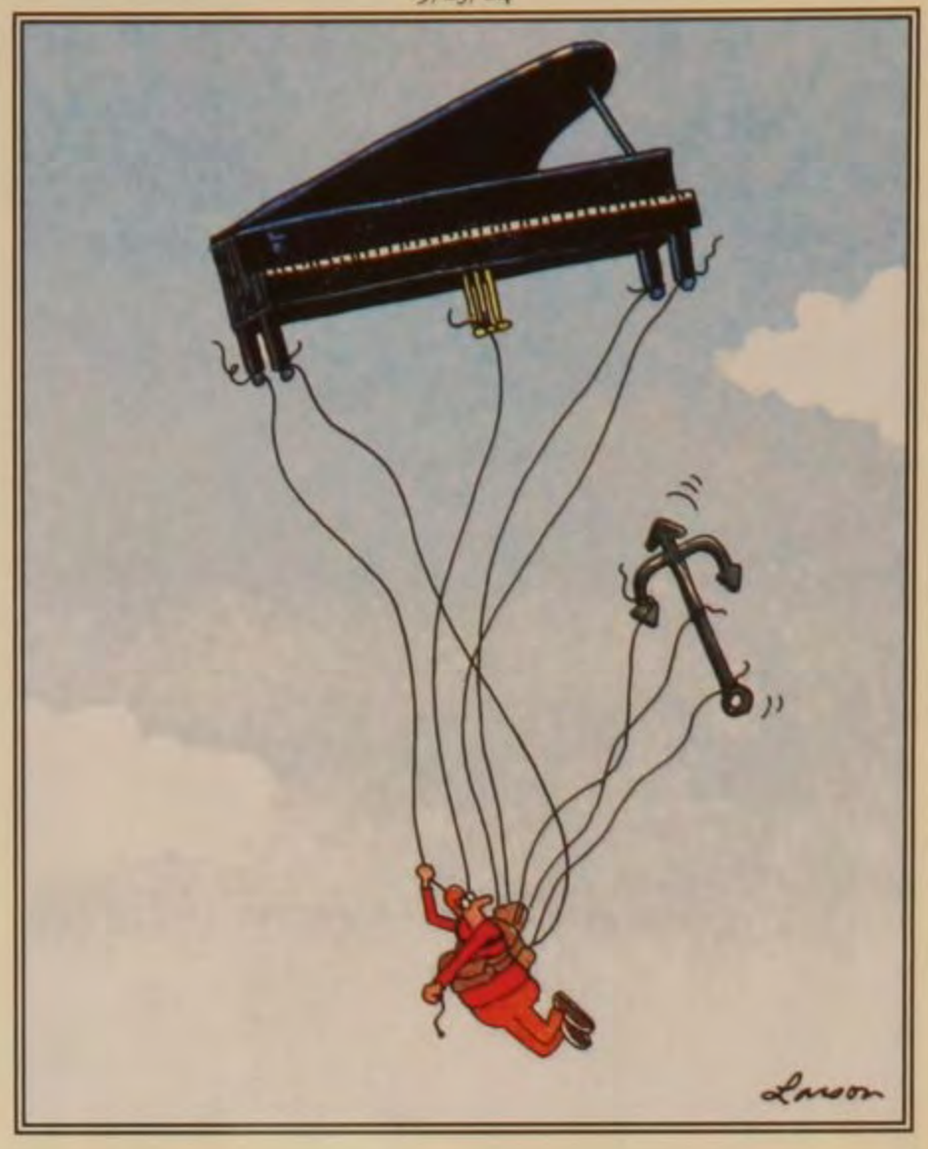
"No doubt about it, Ellington—we've mathematically expressed the purpose of the universe. God, how I love the thrill of scientific discovery!"

September 1984

9/19/84

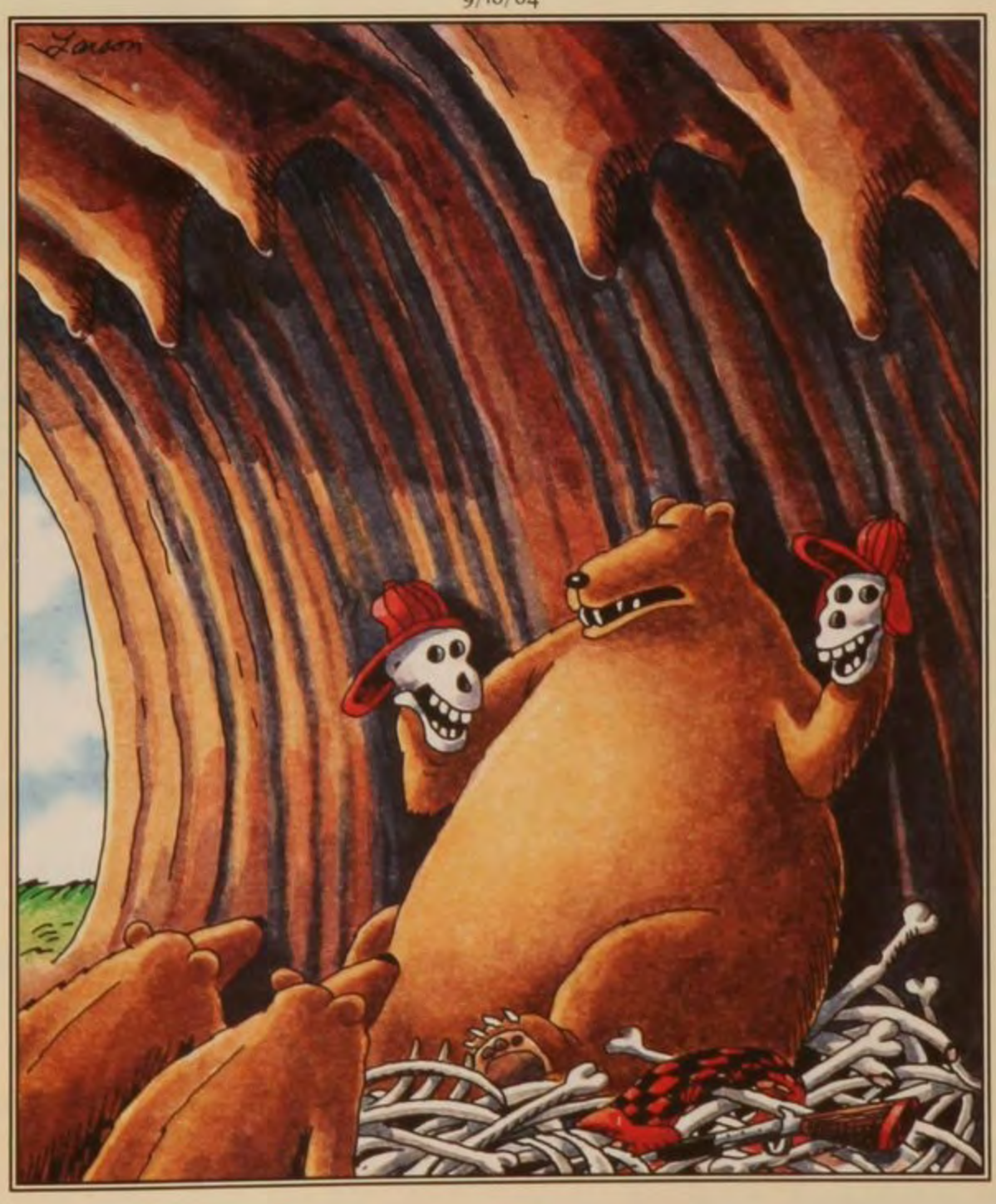
"Watch ... Thag says he make gravel angel."

9/25/84



Murray didn't feel the first pangs of real panic until he pulled the emergency cord.

9/18/84



"Okay, one more time and it's off to bed for the both of you. ...'Hey, Bob. Think there are any bears in this old cave?'...'I dunno, Jim. Let's take a look.'"

September 1984

When cliff divers belly flop

"Ah! The shed skin of some large, reptilian denizen. ... And a bonus, Ellsworth! Here's his wallet."

"Oh! Wait! Wait! My mistake! ... That's him down there!"

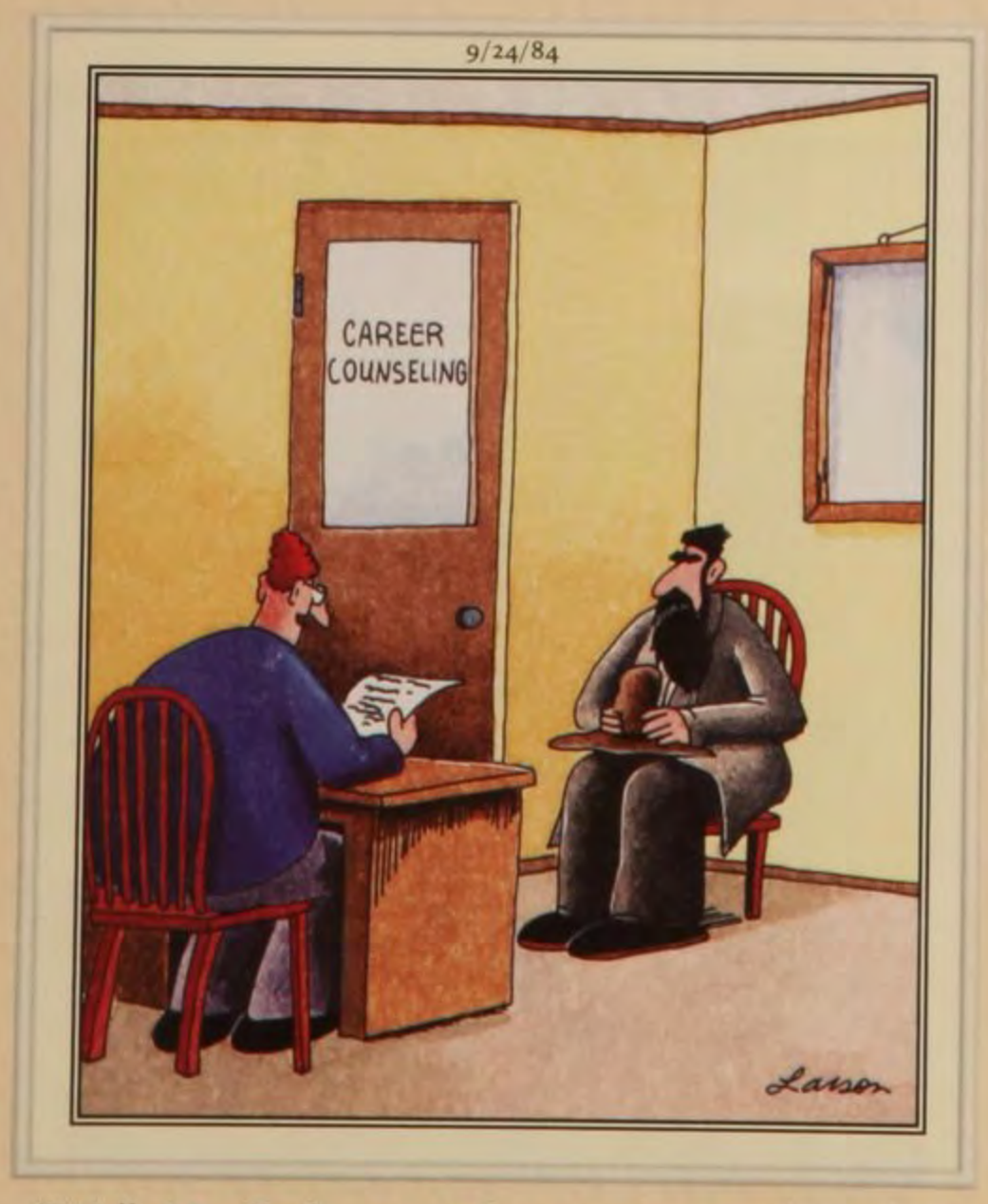
Saturday night at the crypt

One remark led to another, and the bar suddenly polarized into two angry, confrontational factions: those espousing the virtues of the double-humped camel on the one side, single humpers on the other.

"Thag, take napkin. ... Got some mammoth on face."

September 1984

"It's okay! It's okay! The tunnel was closing in on me there for a while, but I'm all right now."

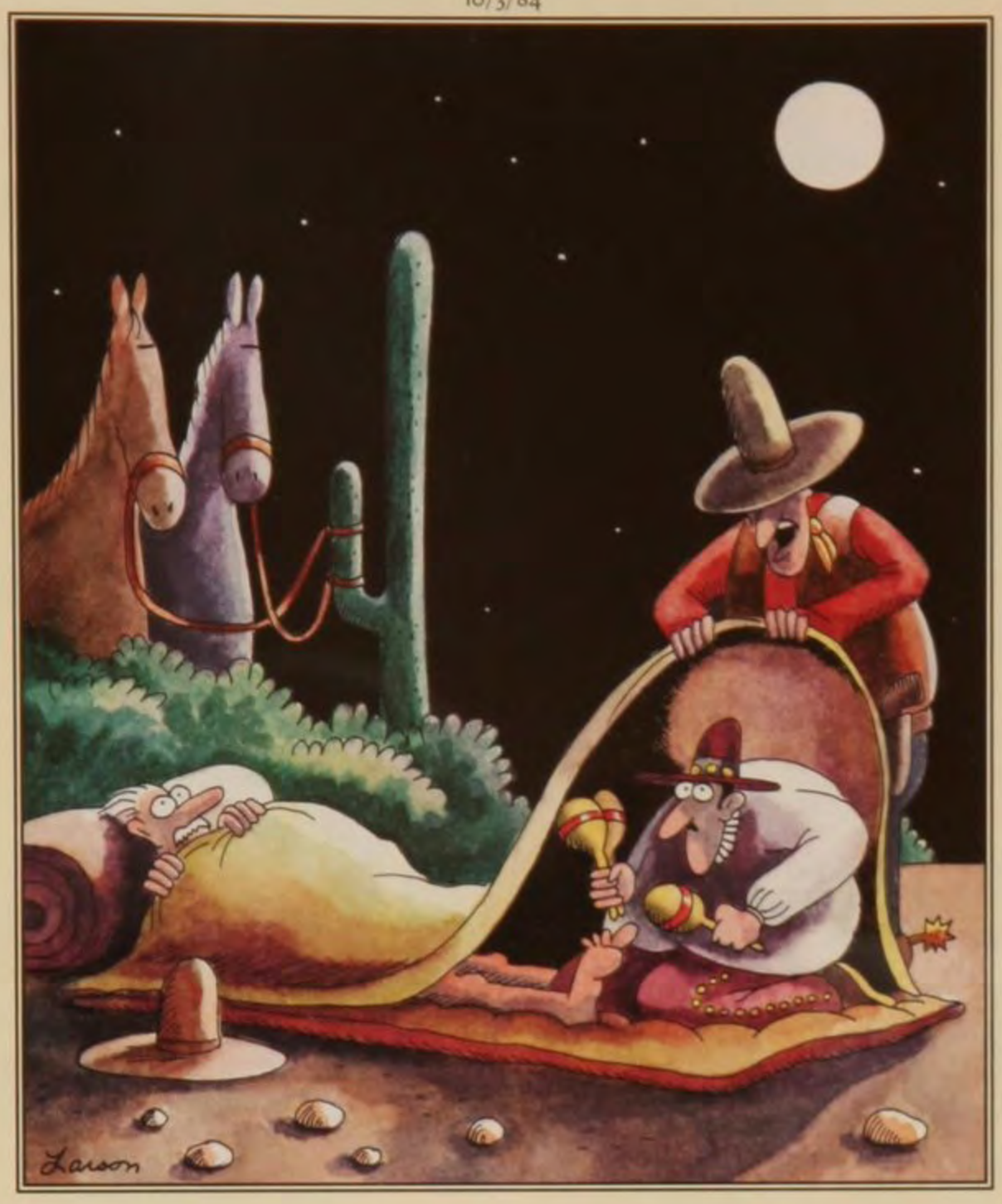


"Well, Mr. Cody, according to our questionnaire, you would probably excel in sales, advertising, slaughtering a few thousand buffalo, or market research."

"Harold! The dog's trying to blow up the house again! Catch him in the act or he'll never learn!"

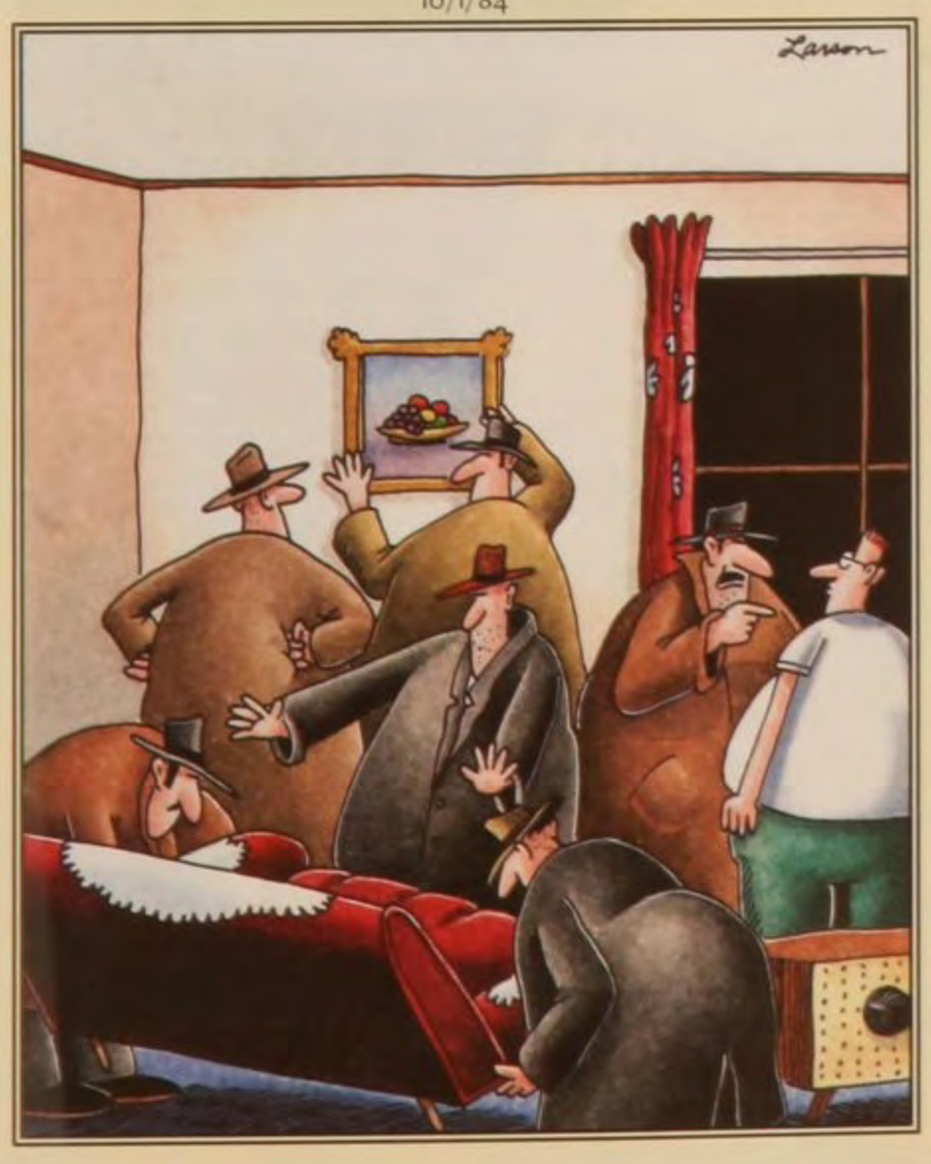
October 1984

10/3/84



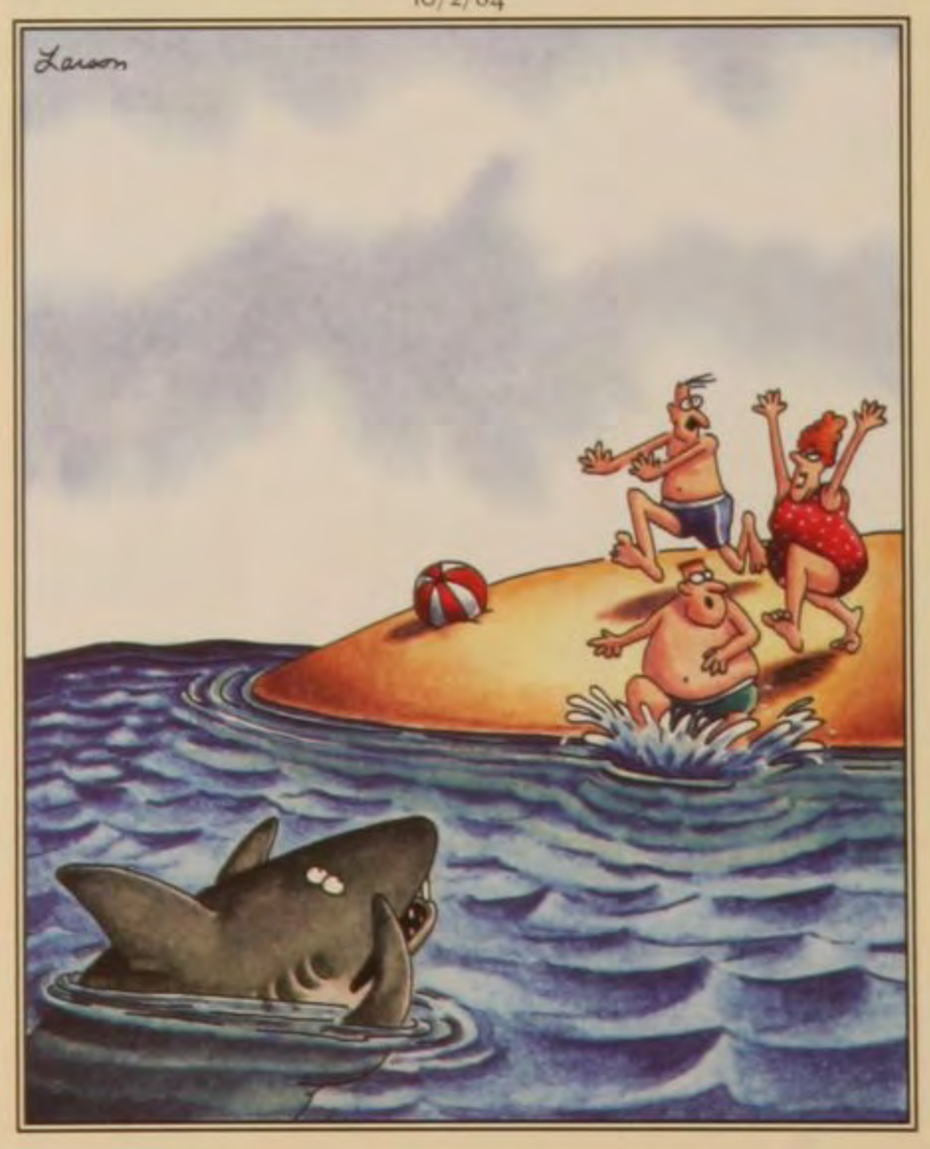
"Ha! Ain't a rattler, Jake. You got one of them maraca players down your bag—and he's probably more scared than you."

10/1/84



"The boss wants his money, see? Or next time it won't be just your living room we rearrange."

10/2/84



"BEAR! BEAR!"

October 1984

"Bob! Wake up! Bob! A ship! I think I see a ship! ... Where are your glasses?"

How birds see the world

"Oh, I see! You return covered with blond feathers, and I'm supposed to believe you crossed the road *just* to get to the other side?"

"Hey! I'm gonna roll now! You guys gonna watch or what?"

October 1984

10/9/84

"Any theories on this, Cummings?"

10/10/84

"Hey, I feel someone moving! Dang, this place gives me the willies."

10/11/84

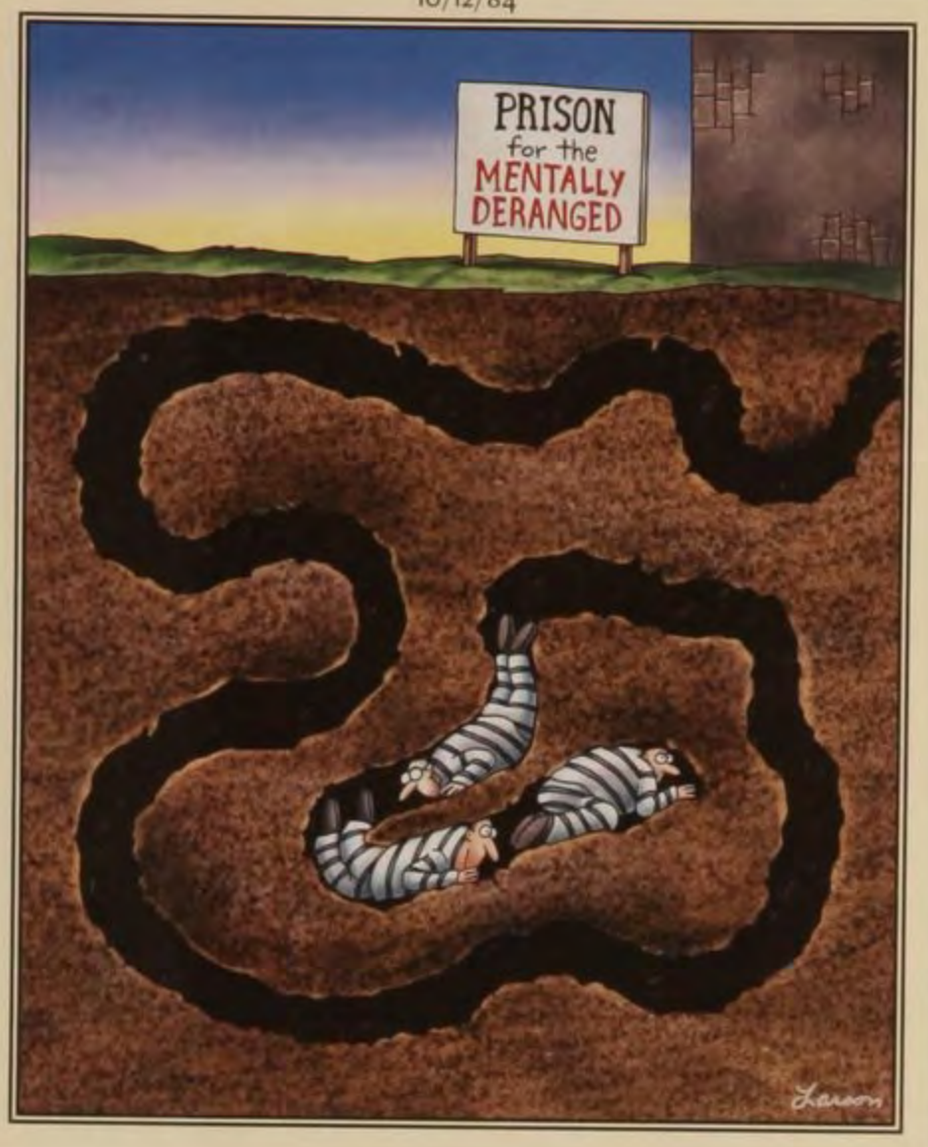
The restless life of the nomad

10/15/84

"No, thank you. It's a little nutso out there for me right now."

October 1984

10/12/84



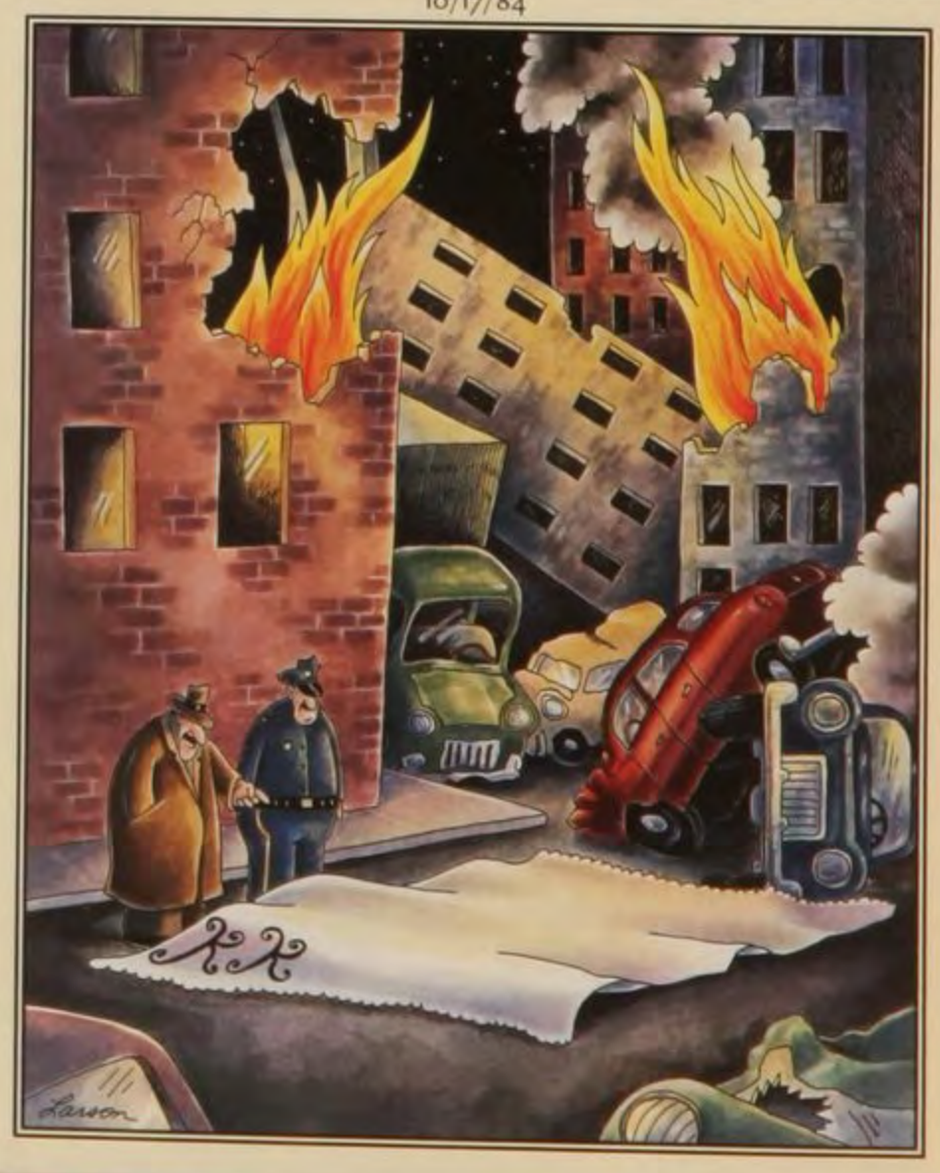
10/13/84

"Oh, Laaaaaarrrrrry ... I think you should look up niiiiiice and eaaaaasy and see what's right ... over ... your ... head."

10/16/84

"Sorry about this, buddy, but the limit on those things is half a dozen—looks like you're one over."

10/17/84



"Take this handkerchief back to the lab, Stevens. I want some answers on which monster did this—Godzilla? Gargantua? Who, dammit!?"

October 1984

10/18/84

Animal nerds

10/20/84

10/23/84

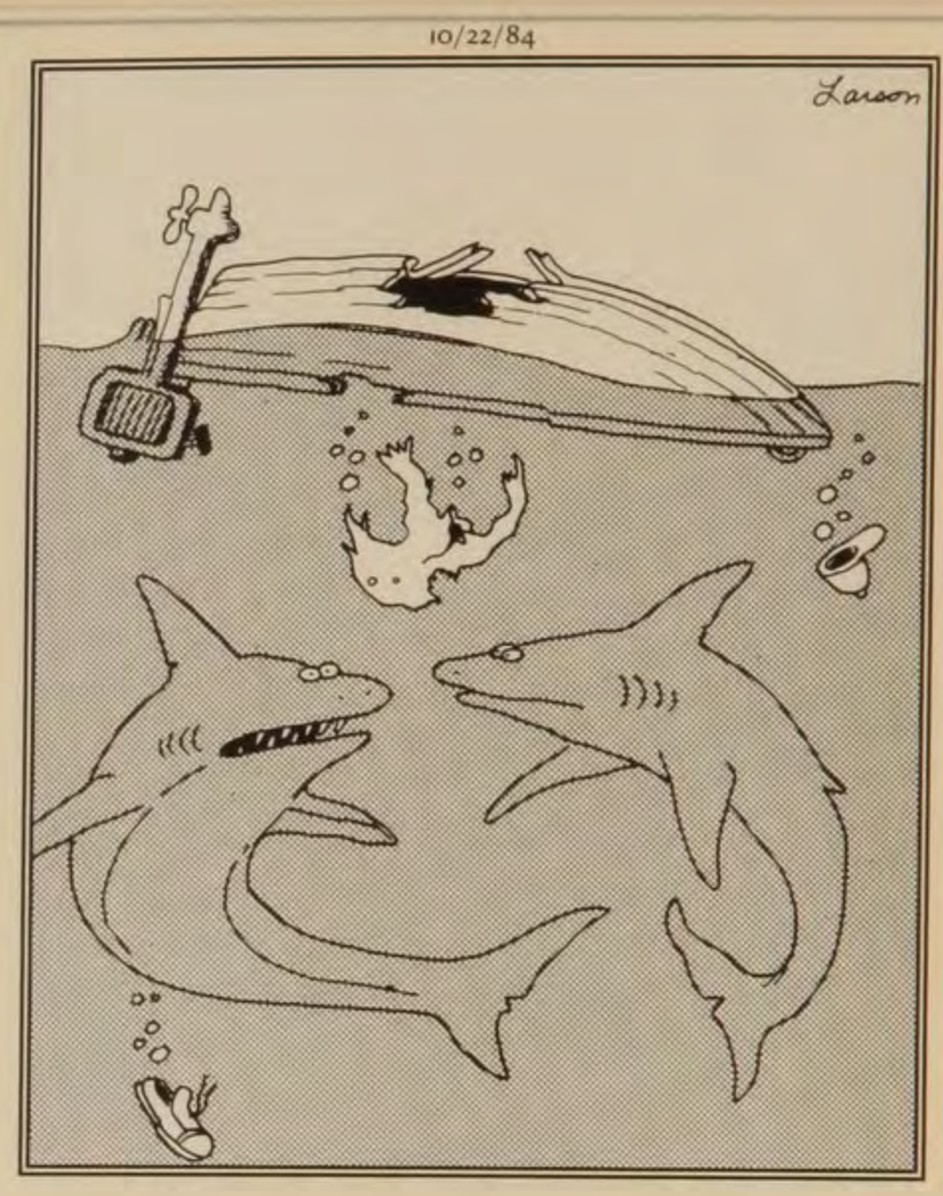
Early experiments in transportation

10/24/84

"I don't seeeeee ... Wait! There it is! Oo!
I hate those little slivers that stand
straight up and down."

October 1984

The balloon was his enemy.



"I was just going to circle them a couple times and leave—but they started yelling 'shark,' and suddenly I felt very proud."

"Well, we've tried every device and you still won't talk—every device, that is, except this little baby we simply call 'Mr. Thingy.'"

The anthropologist's dream: a beautiful woman in one hand, the fossilized skull of a *Homo habilis* in the other.

10/27/84

Jungle graffiti

10/31/84

When animal mimicry breaks down

10/29/84

"Gee ... look at all the little black dots."

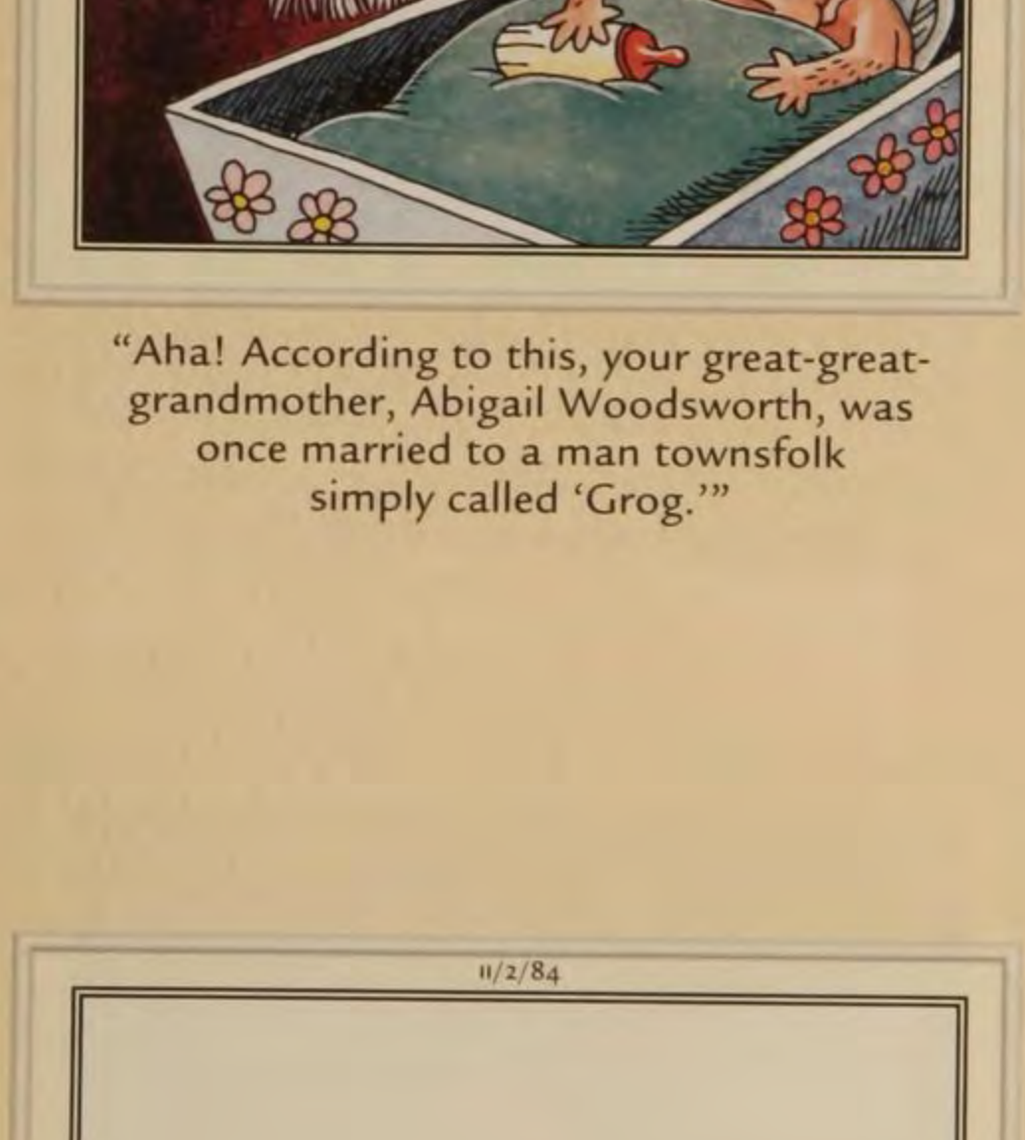
10/30/84

"And here he is—but when I started, I bet he was at least this tall."

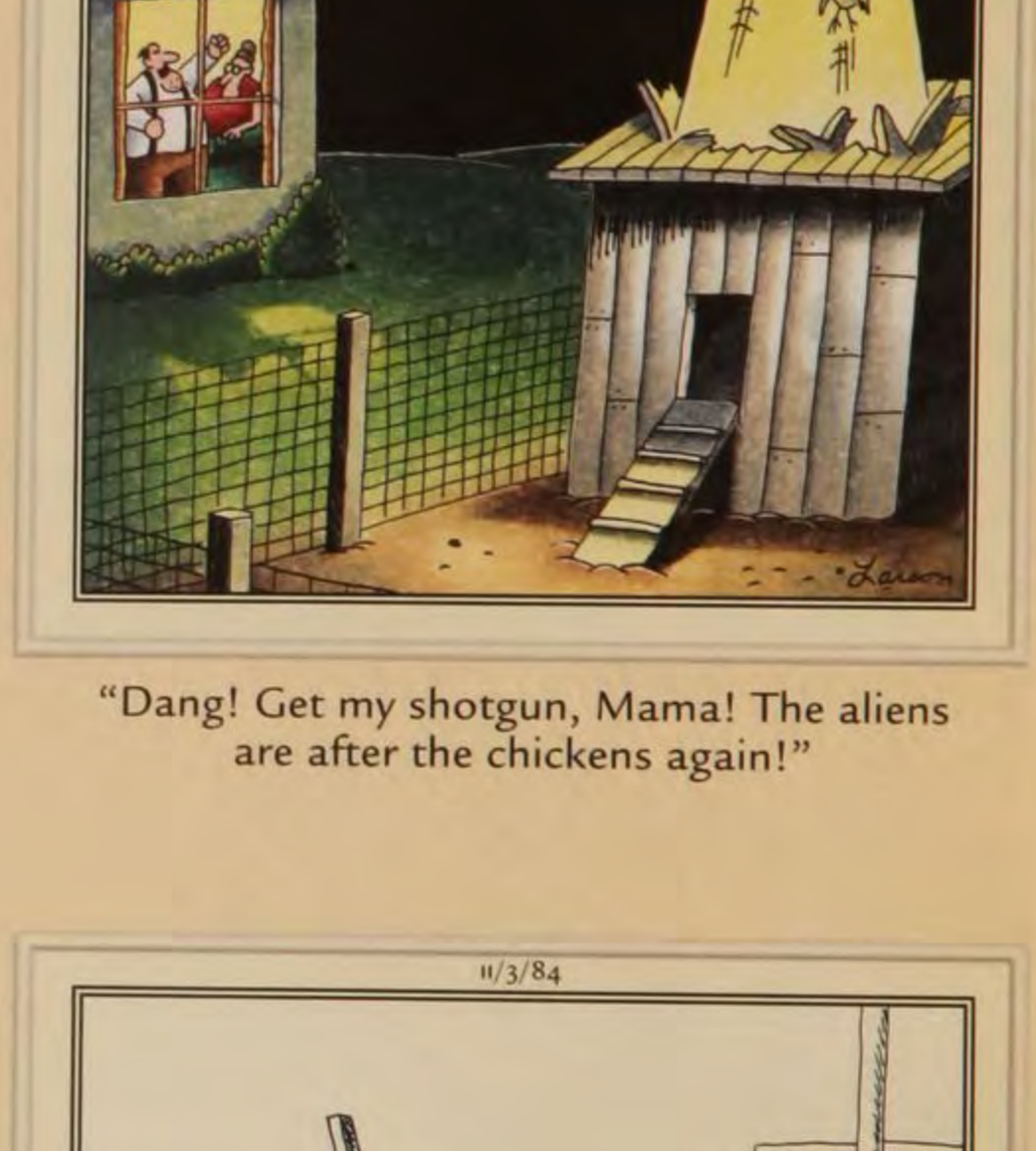
November 1984

"Aha! According to this, your great-great-grandmother, Abigail Woodsworth, was once married to a man townsfolk simply called 'Grog.'"

"Dang! Get my shotgun, Mama! The aliens are after the chickens again!"



Vending machines of the Serengeti



"Thaaaaaar she—mmph!"

November 1984

"Excuse me, but I'm trying to sleep next door
and all I hear is scratching, clawing,
and 'eek, eek, eek.'"

December 24, 1987

Gary Larson, Cartoonist ("Far Side")
c/o Andrews, McMeel & Parker
A Universal Press Syndicate Affiliate
4900 Main Street
Kansas City, MO 64112

Dear Gary:

We at Shell read and enjoy your "Off-the-Wall Calendar" every day; however, we are stumped by your December 22, 1987, cartoon (copy attached) and we would like you to explain it to us.

We don't feel that it can be as simple as "the gorilla fell on the dog's master, so what is the dog going to do now?" We are assuming that the gorilla is King Kong, but why is he lying down? What is that little thing his head is lying on (a parking meter)? Is there something missing, some punch line that we are not getting? Did you put in a cartoon that you knew no one could figure out on purpose just to boggle our minds? This is driving us crazy.

Please send your response to:

Kevin M. Holt or Herb Temple
Shell Oil Company
Financial Department - General Accounting

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Holt
Herb Temple
Ed Filomeo
Cheri Ives

November 1984

"Mr. Fenton? First of all, I want to say that it's all Carl Denham's fault. 'Watchin' that machine?' I says to Carl, and ... Wait, Carl! You can talk when I'm through!"

"Well, this shouldn't last too long."

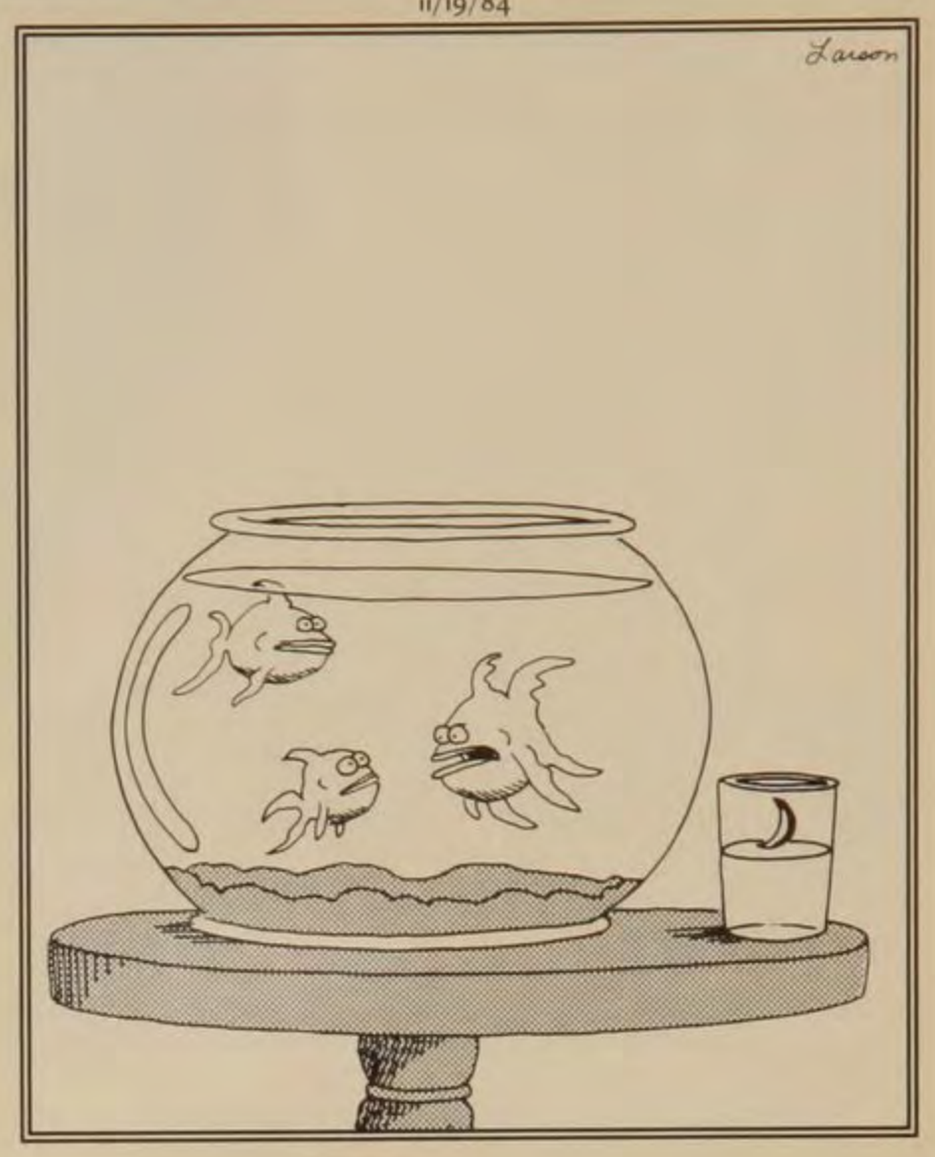
"Now remember—roar just as you leap. ... These things have some of the greatest expressions."

November 1984

11/16/84

"Come and get it! Commmmme and get it! ...
It's not going to get any more raw, y'know!"

11/19/84



"Again? Well *this* time, young man,
you use the glass."

11/14/84

Hour after hour, cup after cup, the two men
matched their caffeine limits in a traditional
contest of the Old West.

11/15/84

"Well, heaven knows what it is or where it
came from—just get rid of it! But save
that cheese first."

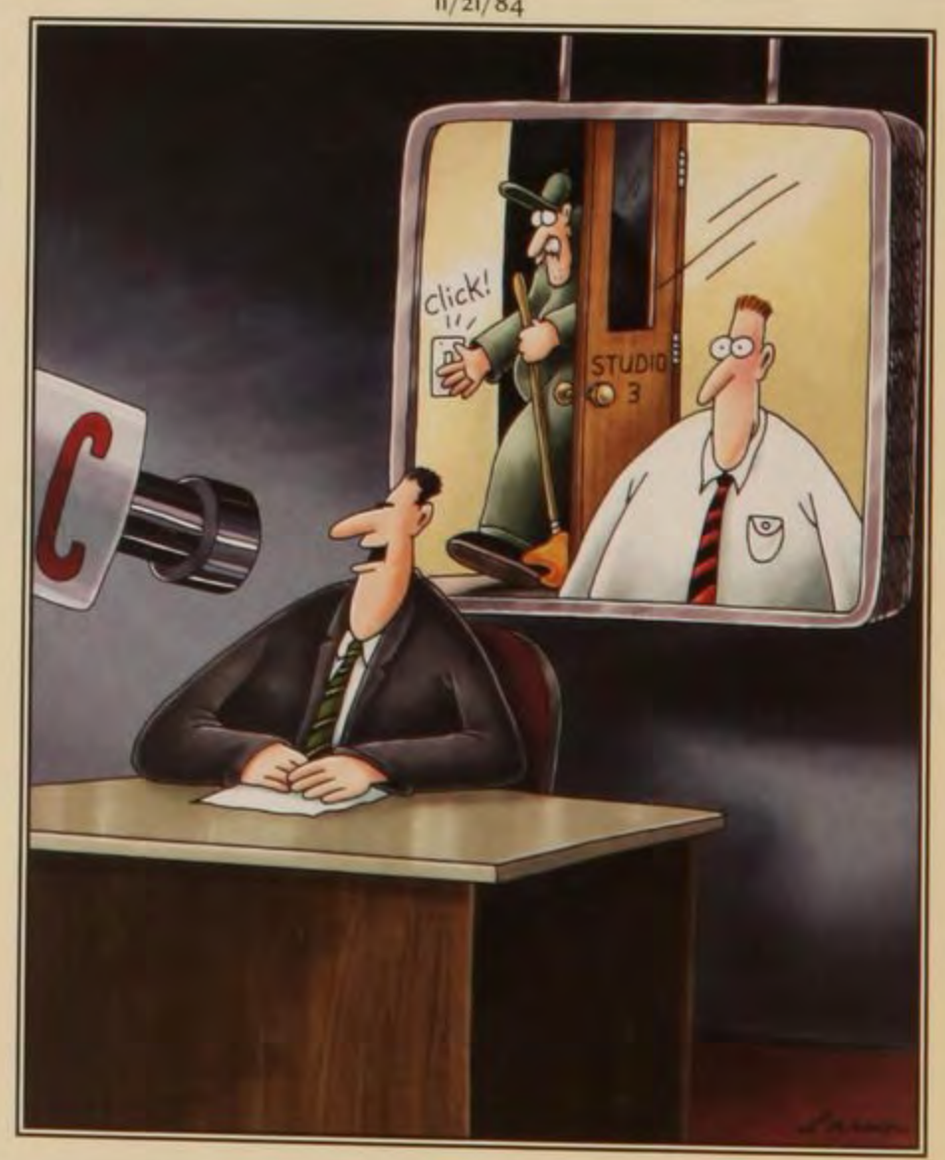
11/17/84

Aerobics in hell

11/20/84

The Holsteins visit the Grand Canyon.

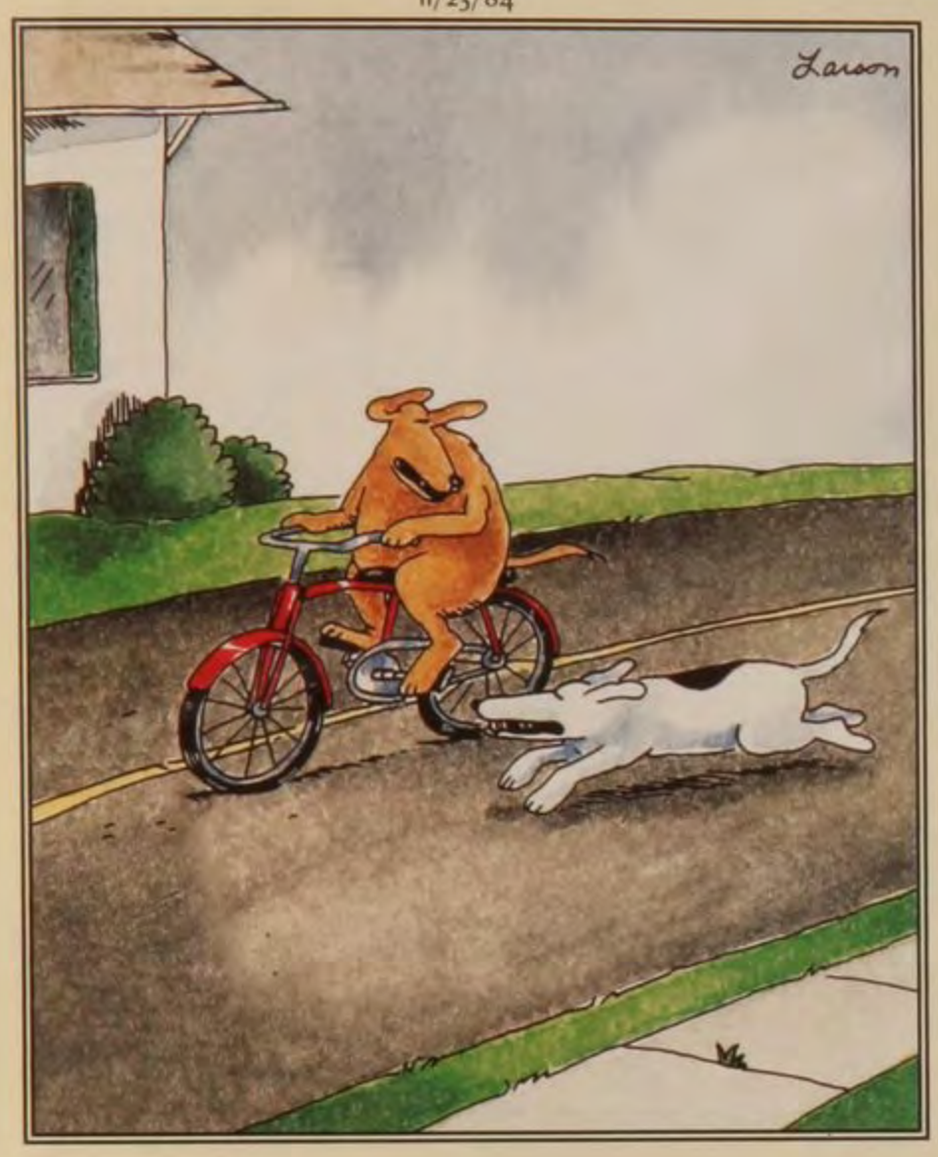
11/21/84



"My next guest, on the monitor behind me, is an organized crime informant. To protect his identity, we've placed him in a darkened studio—so let's go to him now."

November 1984

11/23/84



"Hey! ... Be cool, man, be cool!"

11/24/84

"Remember me, Mr. Schneider? Kenya. 1947.
If you're going to shoot at an elephant,
Mr. Schneider, you better be prepared
to finish the job."

11/26/84

"Hey, thank you! Thank you! That was
'Tie a Yellow Ribbon.'... Now, what
say we all *really* get down?"

11/28/84

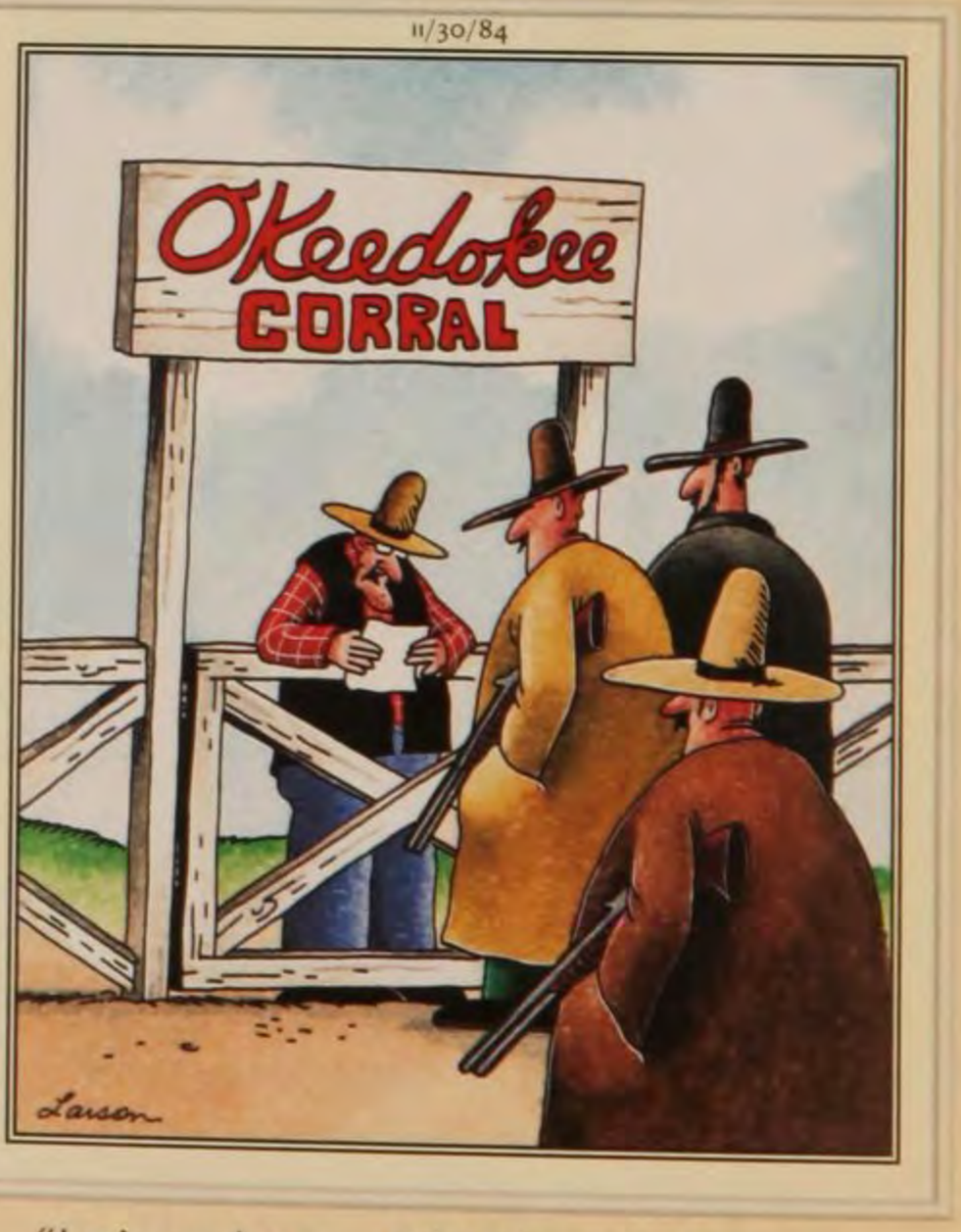
"Wendell ... I'm not content."

November 1984

Profanity on other planets

"Foster! You better get over here if you want to see Meeher's hangnail magnified 500 times."

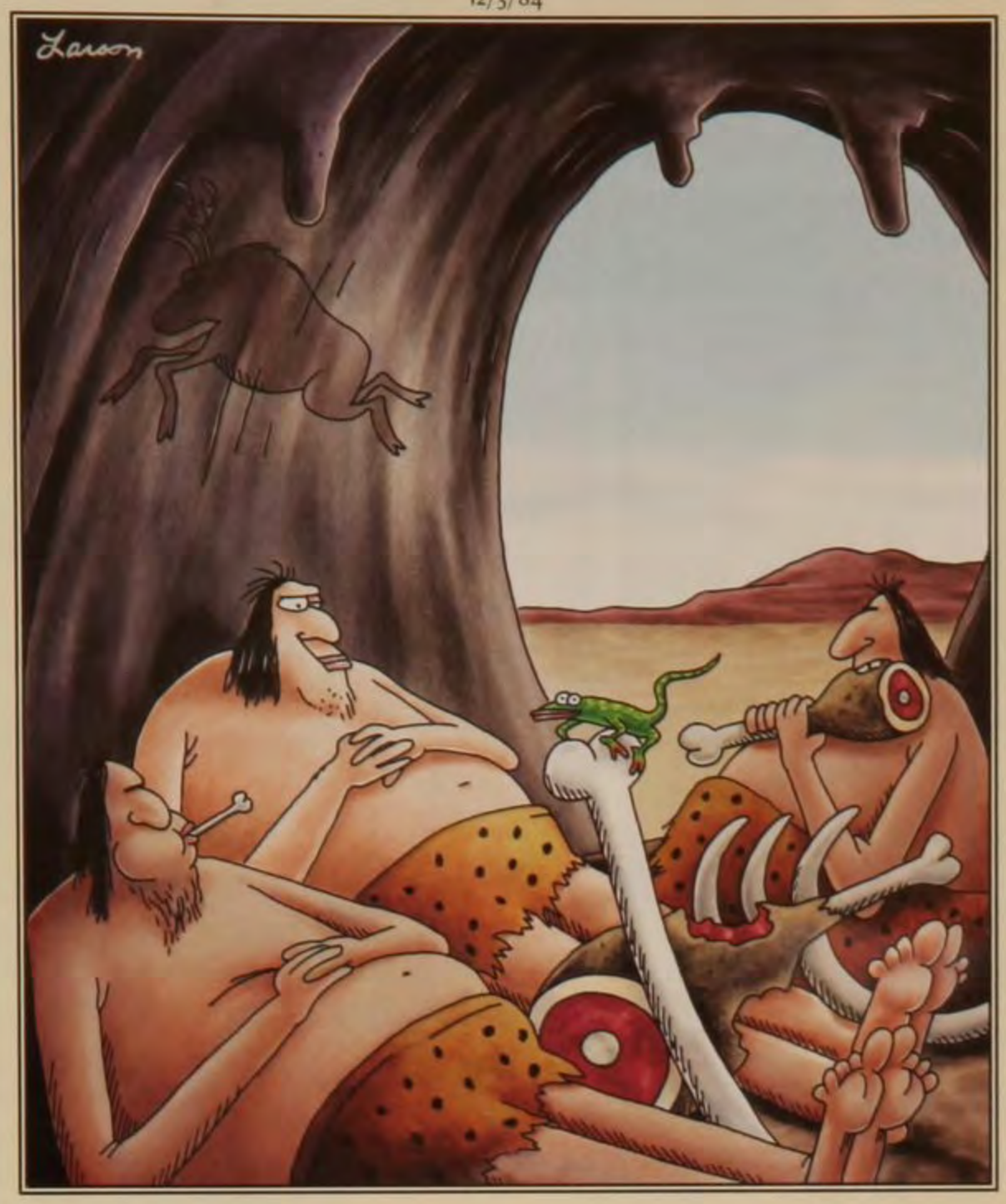
"Well, shucks! I've lost again! Talk about your alien luck!"



"Let's see here. ... Oh! Close, but no cigar. You want the place up the road—same as I told those other fellahs."

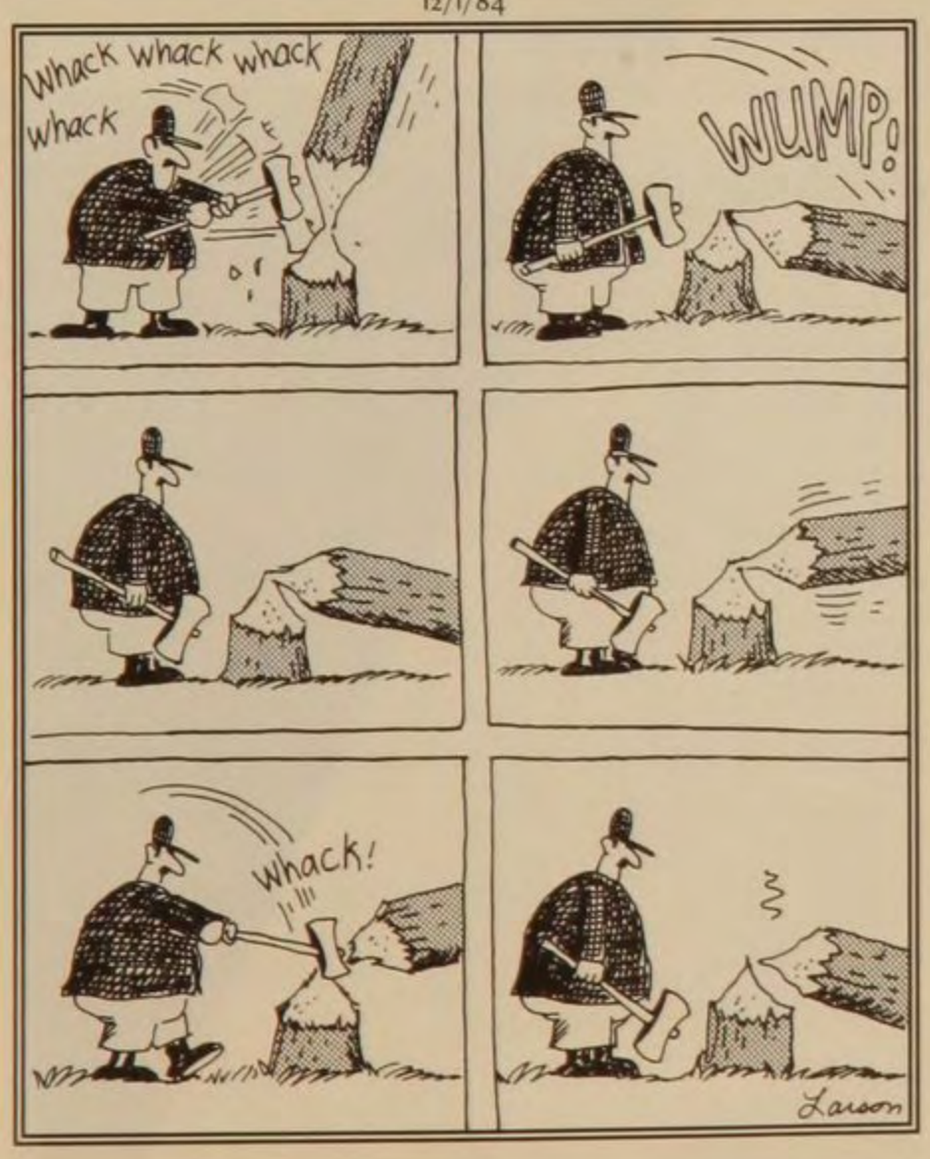
December 1984

12/3/84



The origin of "dessert"

12/1/84

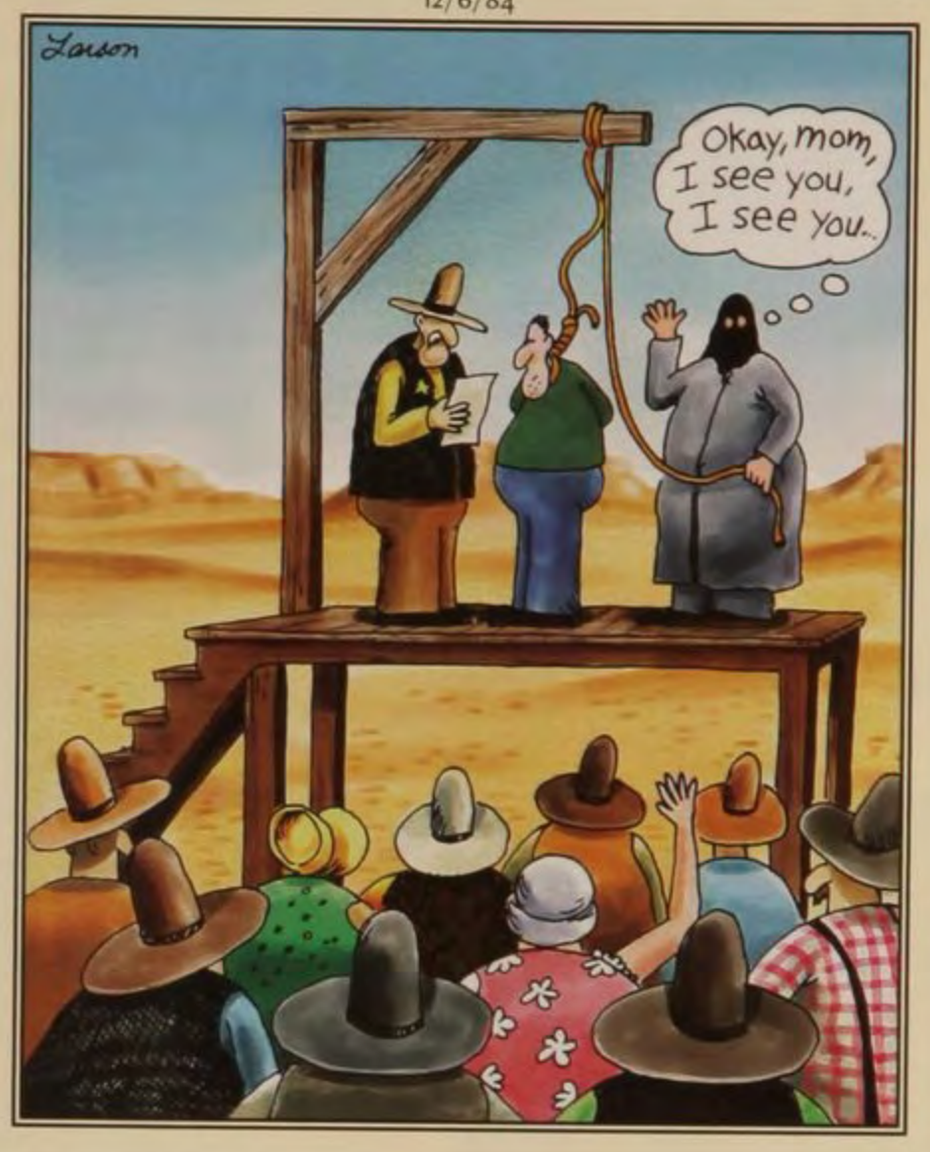


12/4/84

"Now just hold your horses, everyone. ...
Let's let it run for a minute or so and
see if it gets any colder."

December 1984

12/6/84



12/7/84

"Bedtime, Leroy. Here comes your animal blanket."

12/8/84

"It's the mailman, doc. He scares me."

12/10/84

"You gotta check this out, Stuart. Vinnie's over on the couch, putting the move on Zelda Schwartz—but he's talkin' to the wrong end."

December 1984

"Here, Fifi! C'mon! ... Faster, Fifi!"

"Uh-oh ... I've got a feeling I shouldn't have been munching on these things for the last mile and a half."

"Hold on there! I think you misunderstood— I'm Al Tilley ... the bum."

Coaching Association of Canada
Association canadienne des entraîneurs

December 21, 1984

Mr. Gary Larson
The Far Side
c/o Universal Press Syndicate
6700 Squibb Road
Mission, Kansas
66202

Dear Gary,

1984 was quite an eventful year for me. I was married in February. My Niece, Karen Tilley, was crowned Miss Canada in October, and in December I appeared (in name only) in The Far Side.

The last event, of course, takes precedence over the other two! (But please don't tell my wife or my niece.)

I would be curious to know if your role model for Al Tilley . . .The Bum is drawn from your personal experience or whether my reputation here has permeated the United States!

Yours sincerely,

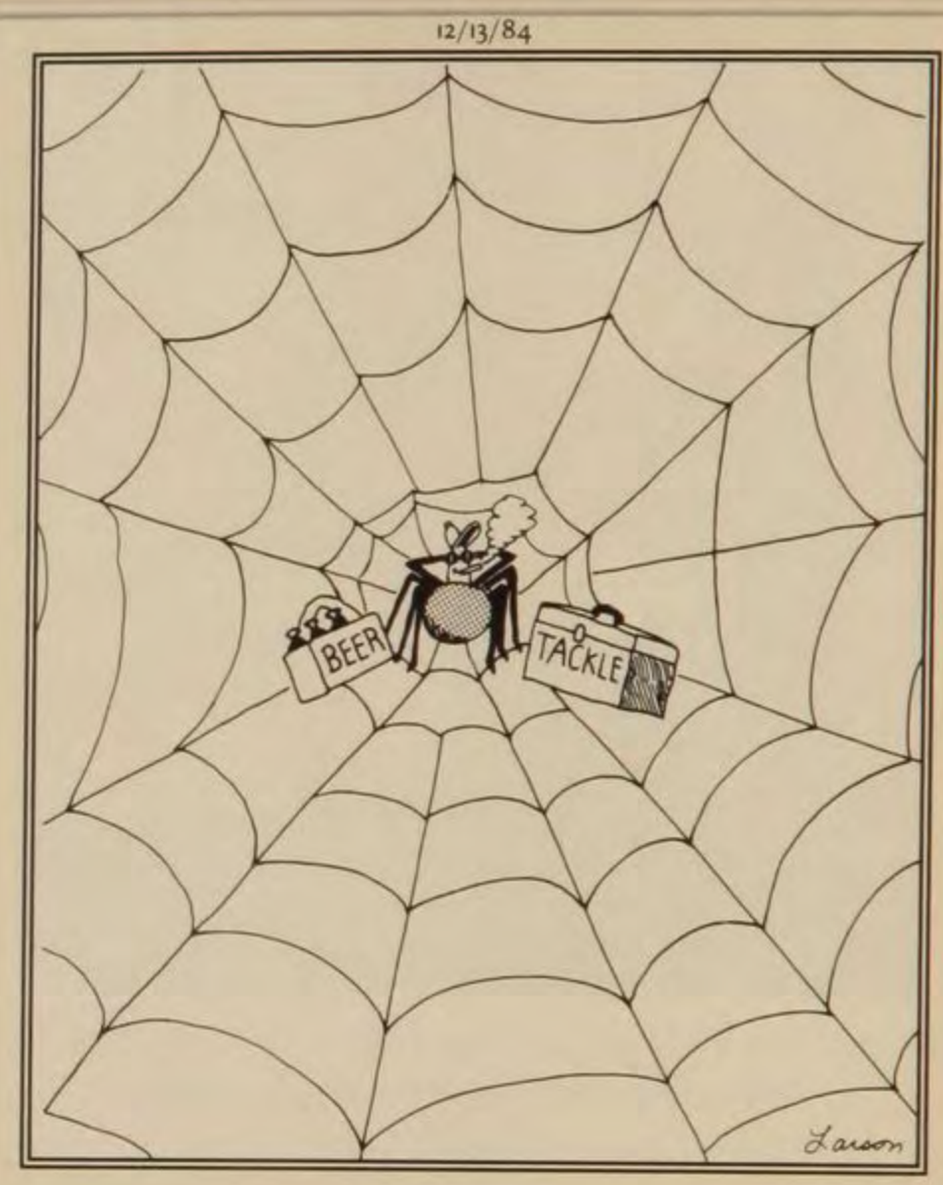
Al Tilley (The Bum)

Al Tilley
Marketing Services Manager

December 1984

12/5/84

12/13/84



12/15/84

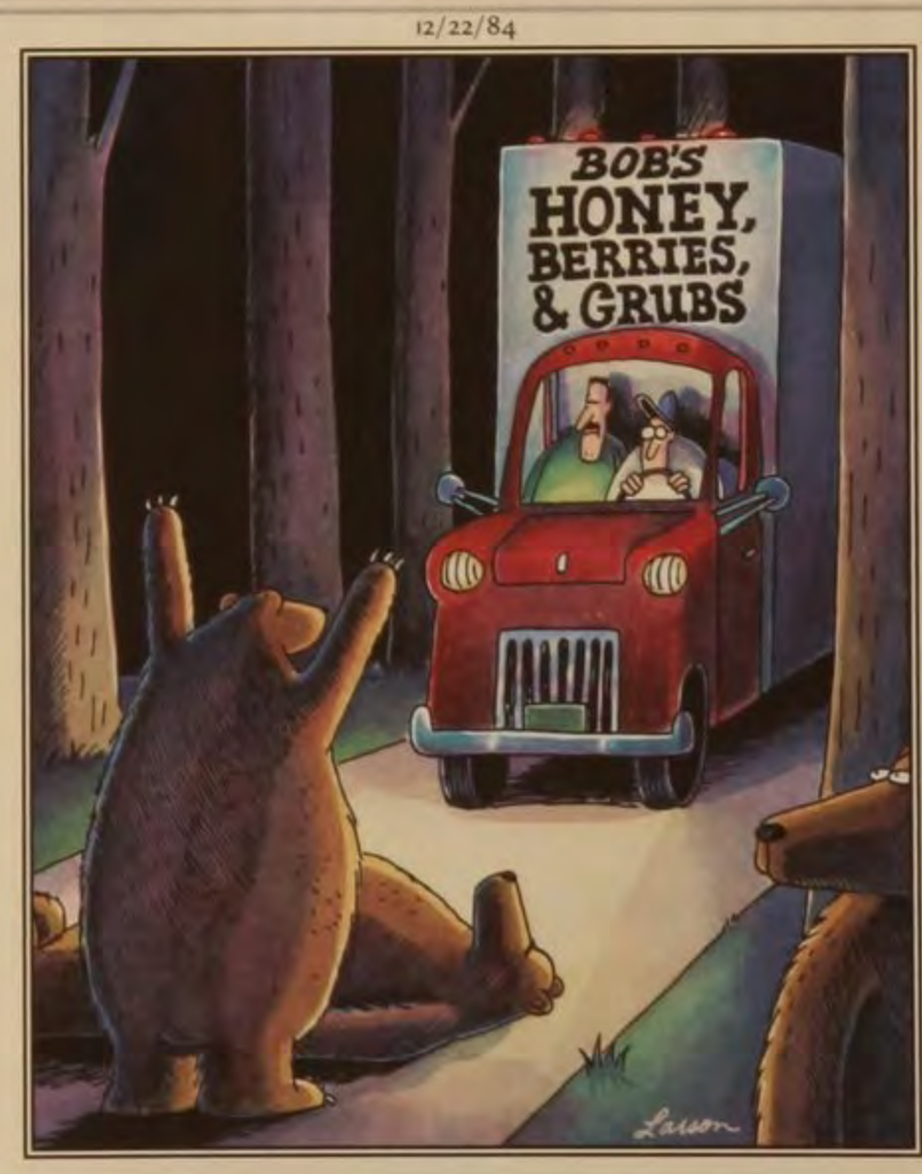
12/19/84

Circa 1500 A.D.: Horses are introduced to America.

December 1984

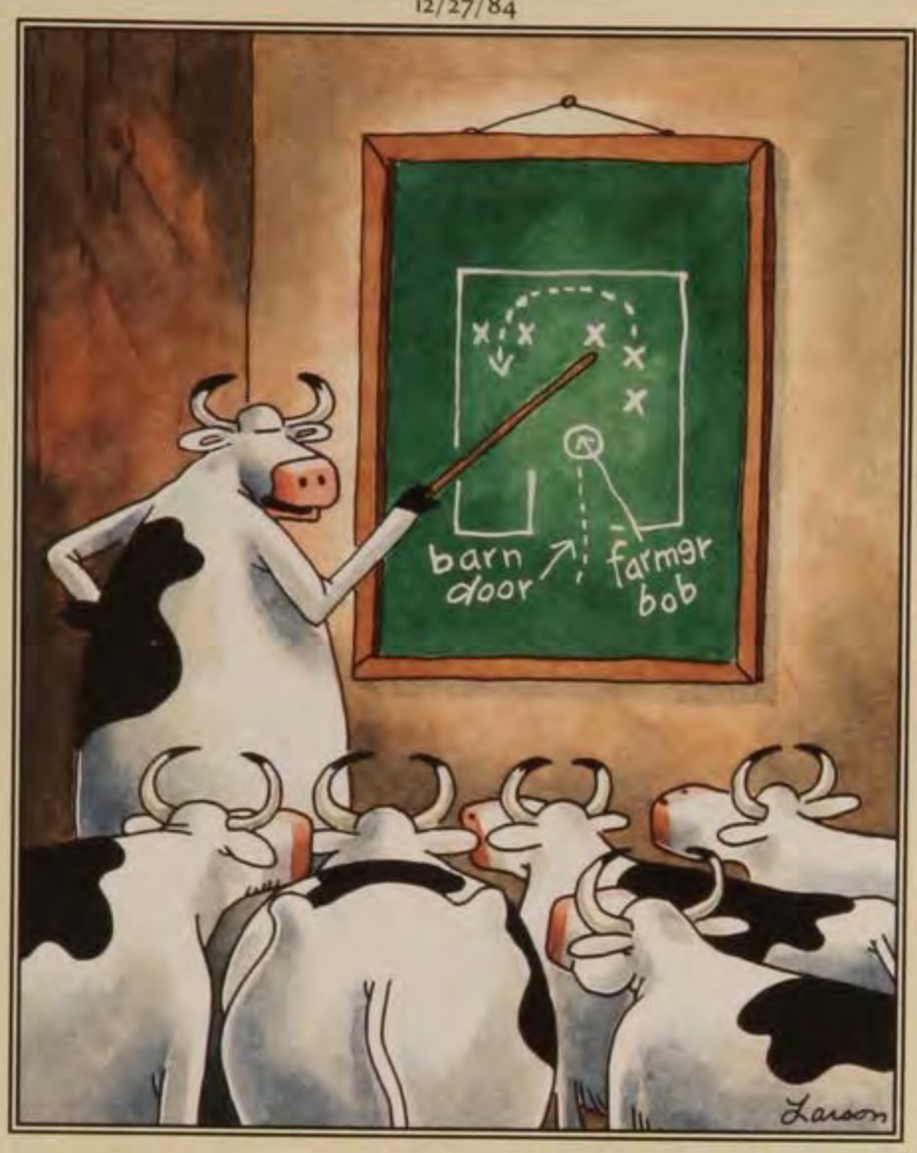
Mobster slapman

"Well, it just sort of wriggled its way up the beach, grabbed Jonathan, and dragged him back again. I mean, the poor thing must have been half-starved!"



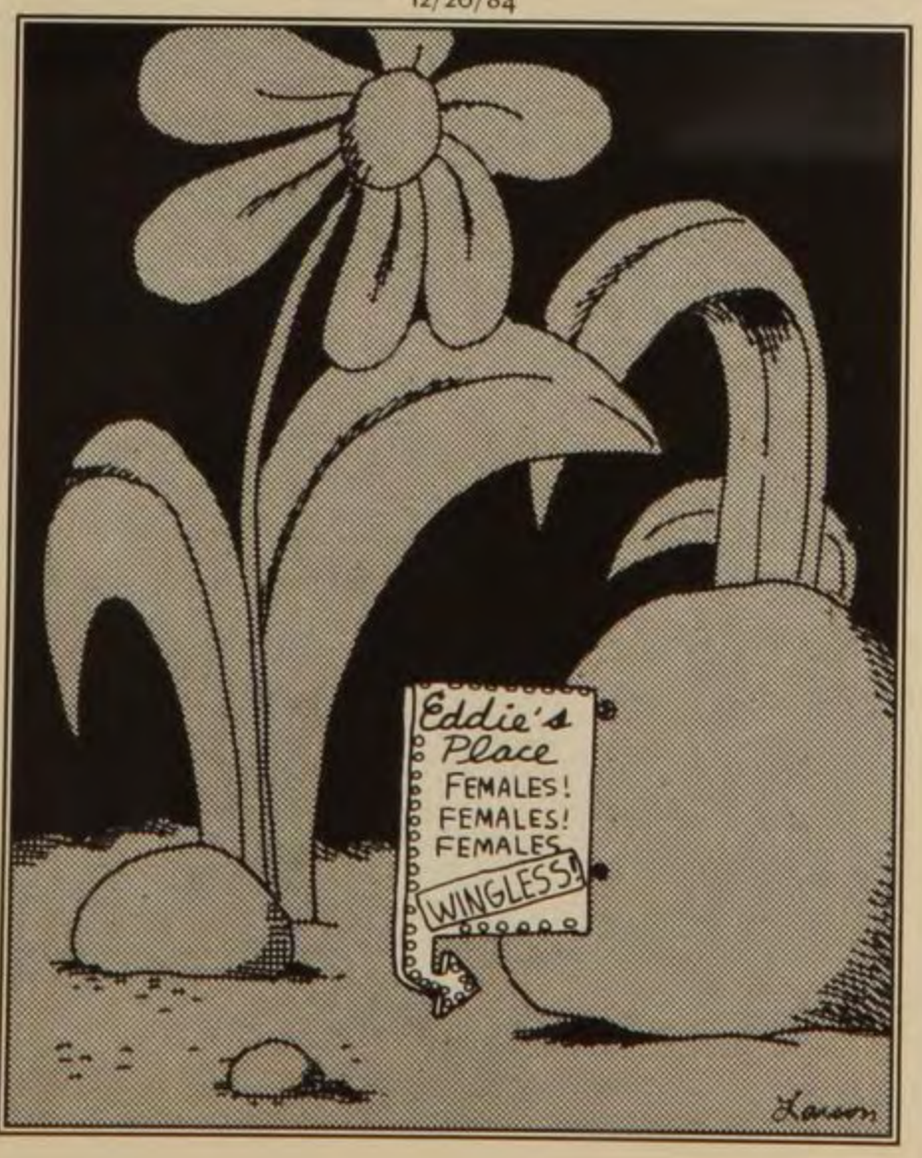
"Just stay in the cab, Vern ... maybe that bear's hurt and maybe he ain't."

December 1984



"So when Farmer Bob comes through the door, three of us circle around and ... Muriel! Are you chewing your cud while I'm talking?"

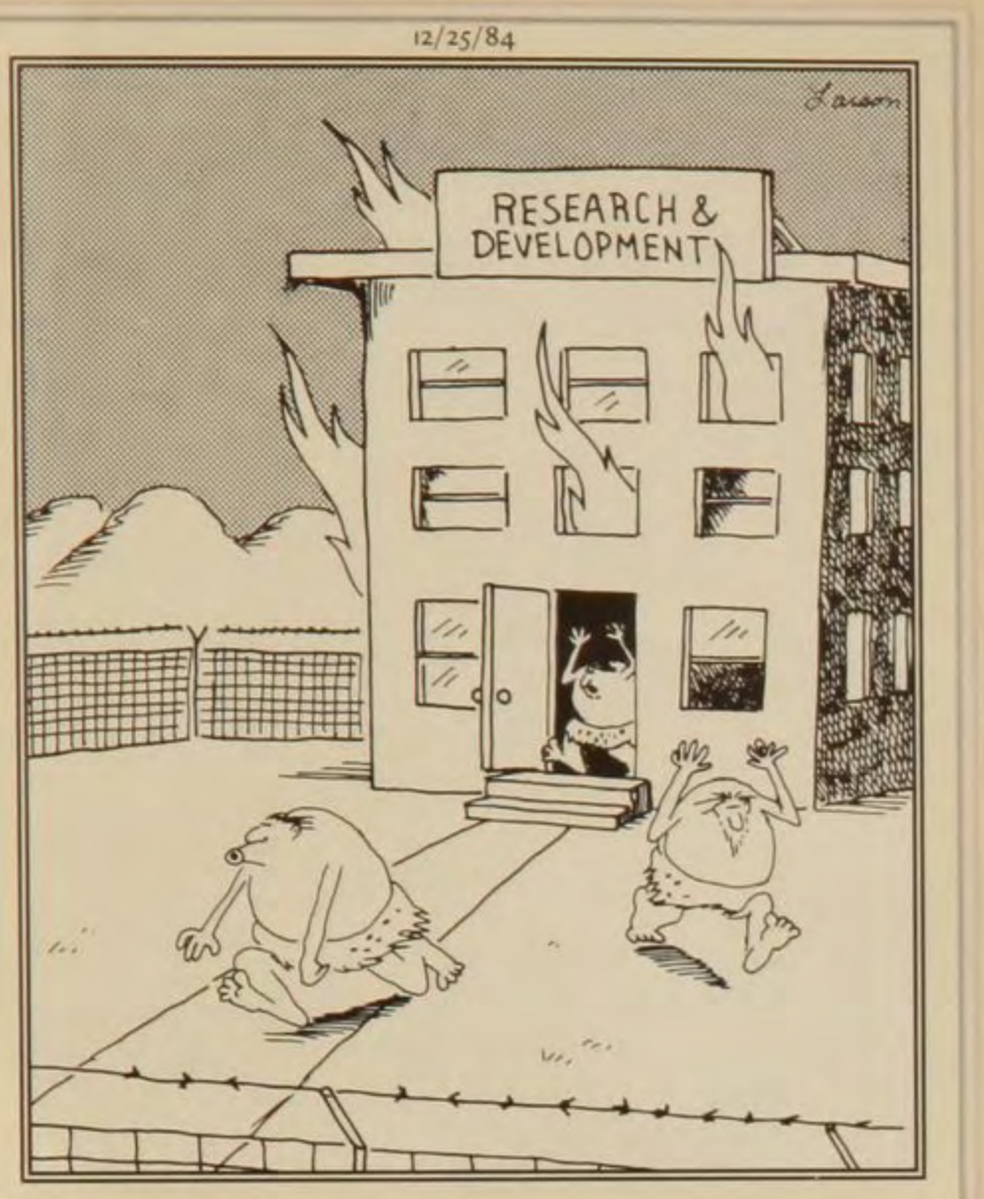
The Vikings, of course, knew the importance of stretching before an attack.



Insect hangouts

"Dang it, Monica! I can't live this charade any longer! I'm not a telephone repairman who stumbled into your life—I'm a Komodo dragon, largest member of the lizard family and a filthy liar."

December 1984



Fire is invented.

"Okay, he's asleep. Pull the wagon, Buck, and I'll start barkin' my head off. ... God, I love this."

"Oh, is that so? Well, you might be a kangaroo, but I know a few things about marsupials myself!"

Unwittingly, Irwin has a brush with Death.

ALIEN

8 S

Big Ungulates, Little Bipeds

As much as I've used cows as a theme in my work, it's a childhood encounter with another farm animal that left an indelible mark on my imagination.

My grandparents had a draft horse, "Nelly." (A name that is the horse equivalent of "Smith," I believe.) I was not only in awe of this enormous, powerful creature, I was more than a little scared.

Under the watchful supervision of my grandfather, a small, wiry man with a commanding voice, it seemed as if Nelly was perpetually pulling some enormous log from one place to another. But on a day off, Nelly would sometimes walk up from her barn to my grandparents' house, insert her huge head through the open kitchen window, and look for a treat from Grandma. For at least one grandkid with an overactive imagination, it was an impressive sight, evoking a stuffed moose head that had suddenly come to life. Grandma would say something like, "Okay, okay, girl—here ya go," and hand her a carrot.

Nelly was an immense animal, smoky-colored, with feet the size of dinner plates. I always sensed she could've accidentally squashed me without even knowing it. (Actually, I had the same feelings about Grandma, but that's another story.)

My grandparents' island farm had a sort of "Lost World" feel to it. The house and barn, in picturesque fashion, were nestled between the shore and a high bank, the latter overgrown with trees and leafy vegetation. Nelly's pasture was far above, accessible only by following her switchback trail that cut its way through the steep, clay hillside. But once you reached the top, the "jungle" gave way to a grassy plateau—my Lost World. For me, it was a place where time stood still and giant horses ruled the earth.

One day, my brother, two cousins, and I—all little squirts—set out on a quest to find this flesh and blood tractor up on her range. It's unclear to me as to why we were doing this: Only Gramps really knew the mysteries of how to start, stop, and shift Nelly. The rest of us were mostly riders or carrot givers. In truth, I was a little scared even to hand-feed Nelly, regardless of the sturdy fence that usually separated us. I always imagined my fingers being sucked up into her jaws by those enormous, prehensile lips, and then being contentedly crunched right along with the carrots. Offering her sugar cubes was the scariest. As you held it up in your palm, someone was always screaming, "HOLD YOUR HAND FLAT! HOLD IT FLAT!" That didn't help.

Actually, in thinking back on it, it may have been my grandpa who inadvertently put the fear of Nelly in me. There was the "foot thing," you see. I don't think Nelly ever actually stepped on anyone's foot, but I remember this was something Gramps used to say: *Be careful around that horse. … If she steps on your foot, she'll crush it! Crush it, I tell ya!* HAHAHAHAHA! (Gramps was a bit eccentric.)

As we climbed the hill, it was hard to ignore the hoofprints that looked like sunken pie pans, let alone the road apples the size of my head. (An unfortunate comparison, but I'll stay with it.) Do you remember that scene in *King Kong* when all those guys landed on Skull Island and went looking for the "mysterious creature" that had taken Fay Wray, and how they moved nervously through the jungle, looking over their shoulders every few seconds? Same scenario.

When we reached the crest, we paused, lowering our voices. There were no fences up here. We were far from the barn and far from Gramps. We were in Nelly's domain, and our feet were plump little sausages, waiting to be stomped into patties.

And thar she grazed. Nelly was far across the pasture but in plain view, standing in profile with her head lowered into the tall grass. The four of us stood there, just watching her, I suppose trying to figure out what would happen next. I think somebody must have laughed or something, because Nelly lifted her Tyrannosaurus-size head and looked in our direction. I can still see it; I'm there as if it was yesterday. She's not chewing anymore. She's looking. Straight at us. (I thought it was only dogs that could sense fear, possibly chickens—now I know horses are also fairly good at it.) Nelly headed toward us. Kong was coming.

Well, the four of us simultaneously screamed, did a 180, and started running with the firm belief that our lives depended on getting back down that hill and over the fence. About halfway back down that hillside, with Nelly in hot pursuit, I must have sensed she was going to overtake us, because I pitched myself off the narrow trail, landing face-down in some ferns. And there I froze. I couldn't see Nelly, and I remember I didn't want to look. But I could definitely hear her. She was bearing down on my hiding place like a locomotive. This was a long, long time ago, but I can still hear the rhythmic thudding of Nelly's hooves and the rhythm of her breathing, which—I swear—sounded like, "Crush feet, crush feet, crush feet! …"

It was almost impossible not to jump up and simply have my feet pulverized and be done with it. But I stayed where I was. And

Nelly sailed right on by. It was like that Doppler effect: crushfeetcrushfeetcrushfeetcrushfeetCRUSHFEETcrushfeetcrushfeetcrushfeet … She didn't see me. She was going to crush the feet of the others, not mine. I felt sorry for my brother and cousins, but God, it felt good to be alive!

Epilogue

Everyone escaped unharmed. I know today that having our feet crushed was at best a remote possibility; Nelly was a wonderful, benevolent animal, and when she looked across the field and saw us she only recognized us as Those Things That Bring Me Carrots. But something was definitely etched into my psyche from that experience of being chased through the woods by a 2,000-pound animal (even if it was just a horse), and the emotions I felt have been fodder for more than a few of my cartoons. It's that sensation of finding yourself in the presence of something that doesn't know or care you're a member of the highest form of life on the planet—all it sees is food or possibly an irritation to be dealt with.

Some writers (and at least one cartoonist) have a fascination for this primal wiring in all of us—that big, instinctual button at the bottom of our brains that cuts through all our higher cognition and says, simply, RUN LIKE HELL!

Note: Certain conditions can trigger this mechanism's companion button, the TOO LATE! HIDE! HIDE! button. Which one kicks in when we're in some desperate situation—whether it be facing a large, charging animal or simply observing Jehovah's Witnesses approaching our front door—is just one of those mysteries of the human nervous system.

"Well, what the? … I *thought* I smelled something."

Left to right—Danny, Cathy, Janice, Gary, and Nelly (1954)

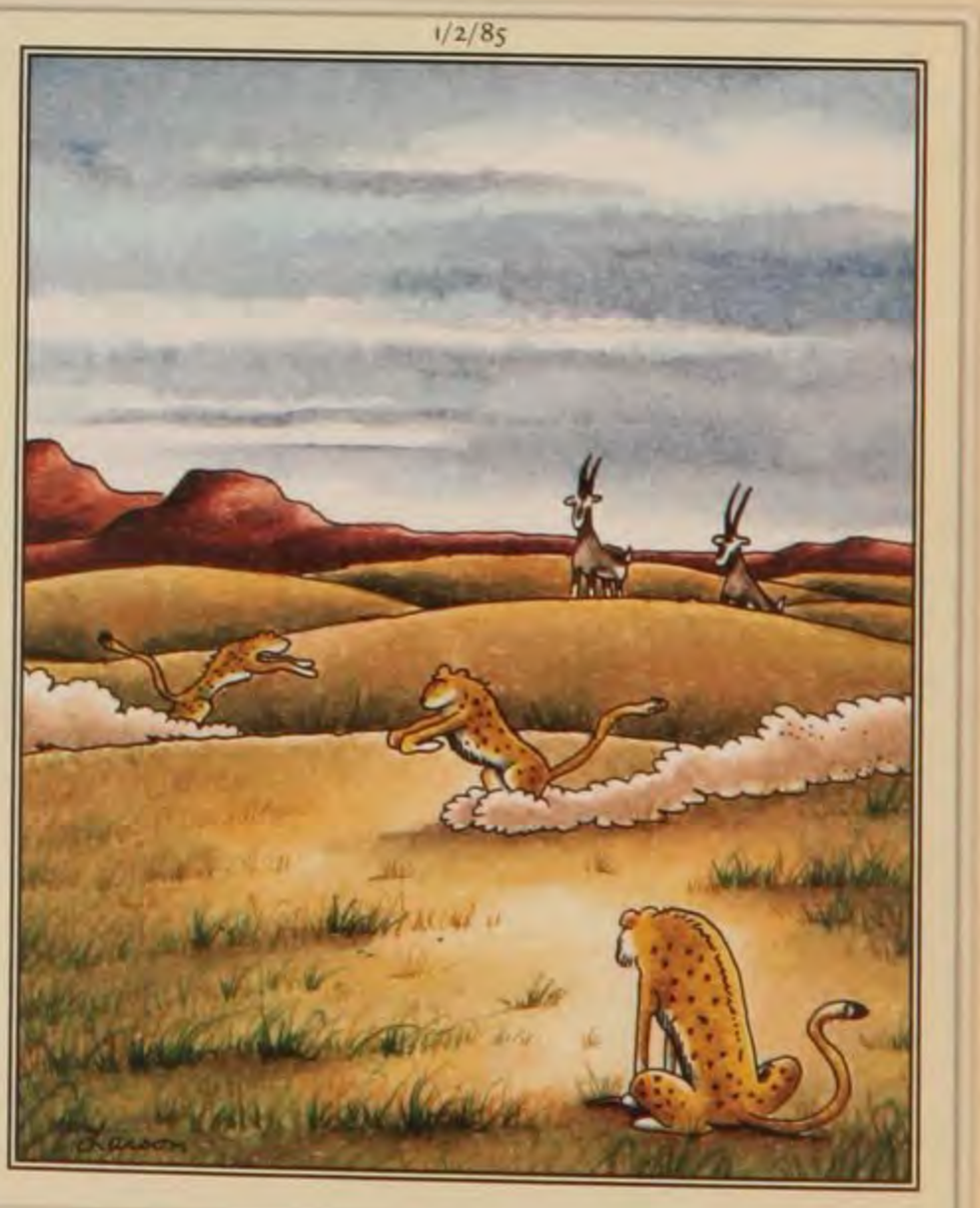
Photo by Gary's dad

January 1985

"Well, here's your problem, Mr. Schueler."

"Nuclear warheads, huh? ... More like *defused* nuclear warheads, if you ask me!"

"Okay, listen up! The cops are closing in on this place, so here's our new hideout: 455 Elm Street. ... Let's all say it together about a hundred times so there'll be no screw-ups."



Cheetah wheelies

January 1985

City of Bellevue

January 3, 1985

Gary Larson
The Seattle Times
P.O. Box 70
Seattle, Washington 98111

Dear Mr. Larson:

I am one of your most ardent fans who has probably never missed one of your published cartoons.

It is my sad duty, however, to share my professional expertise with you and therby identify a technical error in today's Seattle Times - the wide-eyed dog reading "The Mailman Carried Mace". The fact is that Mace does not work on dogs but on the bright side most people do not know that. A caption like "The Mailman Carried a 10% Ammonia Solution in a Spray Bottle" probably would not have had much impact, of course, but the accuracy would have been unchallenged.

Well, keep them coming and if you ever need some more great advice like this, just call me.

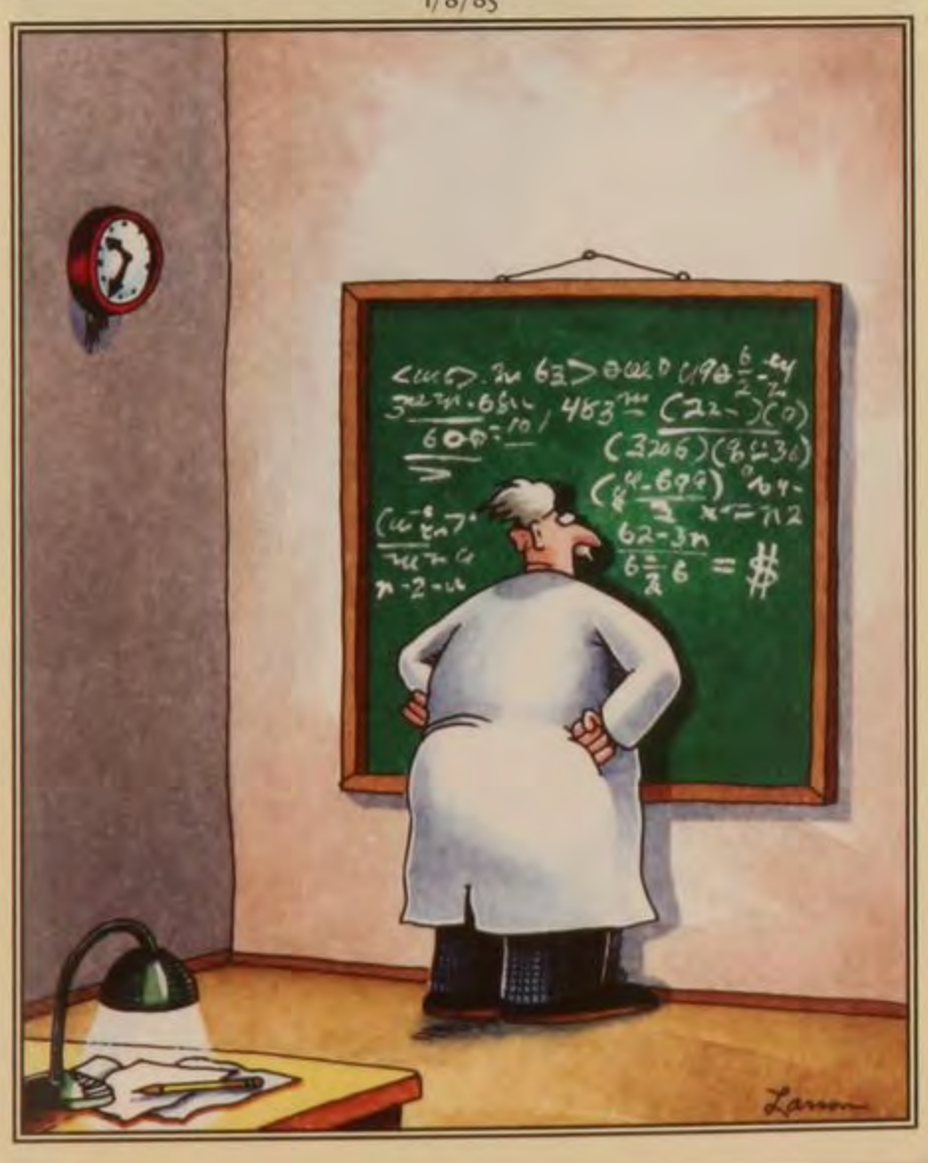
Yours very truly,

D. P. Van Blaricom
Chief of Police

1/3/85

1/4/85

1/8/85



Einstein discovers that time is actually money.

January 1985

1/9/85

How Nature says, "Do not touch."

1/7/85

"Well, somehow they knew we were—whoa! Our dorsal fins are sticking out! I wonder how many times *that's* screwed things up?"

1/16/85

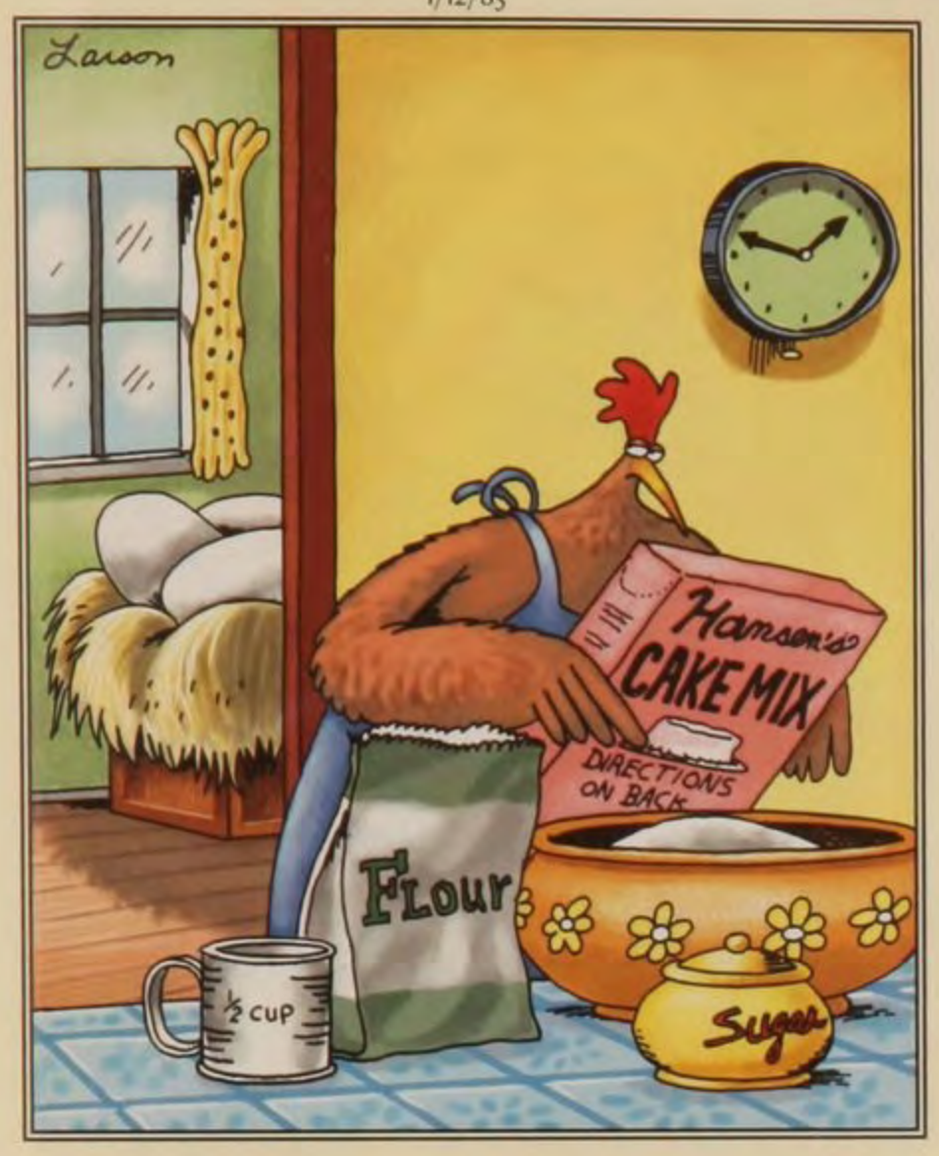
"I'm leaving you, Frank, because you're a shiftless, low-down, good-for-nothing imbecile ... and, might I finally add, you have the head of a chicken."

1/11/85

"There it is—the old Muffy place. They say on some nights, when the moon is full, you can still hear him dragging his chain over to the old oak and back."

January 1985

1/12/85



1/14/85

"*Now* that desk looks better. Everything's squared away, yessir, squaaaaaared away."

1/15/85

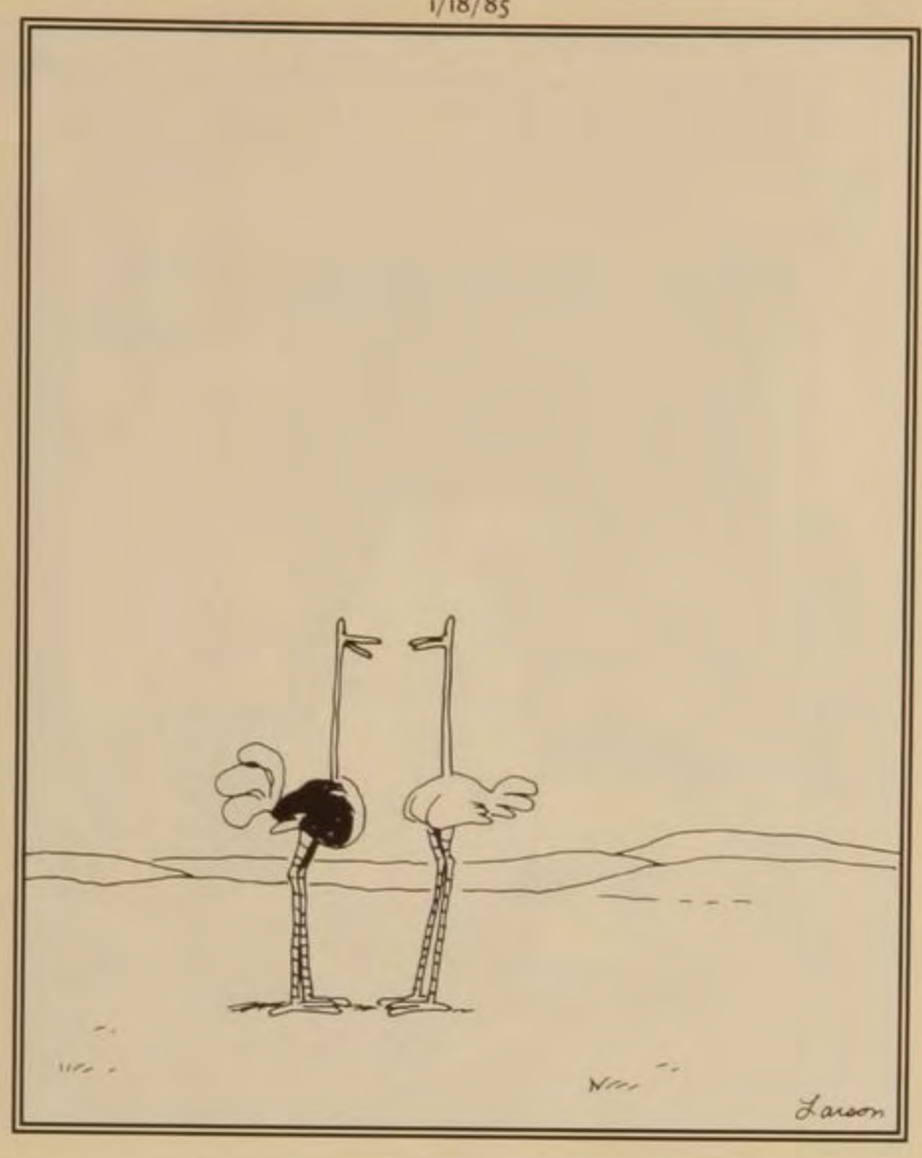
"I can't believe you. ... We go in and out of this cave a hundred times a day, but you always just *have* to try that thing!"

1/17/85

"Well, we might as well put it on board—although I'm not sure what use we'll have for a box of rusty nails, broken glass, and throwing darts."

January 1985

1/18/85



"Oh, wow! How could you even *think* that, Wendy? Of *course* it's your mind I'm attracted to!"

1/22/85

The perils of improper circling

1/19/85

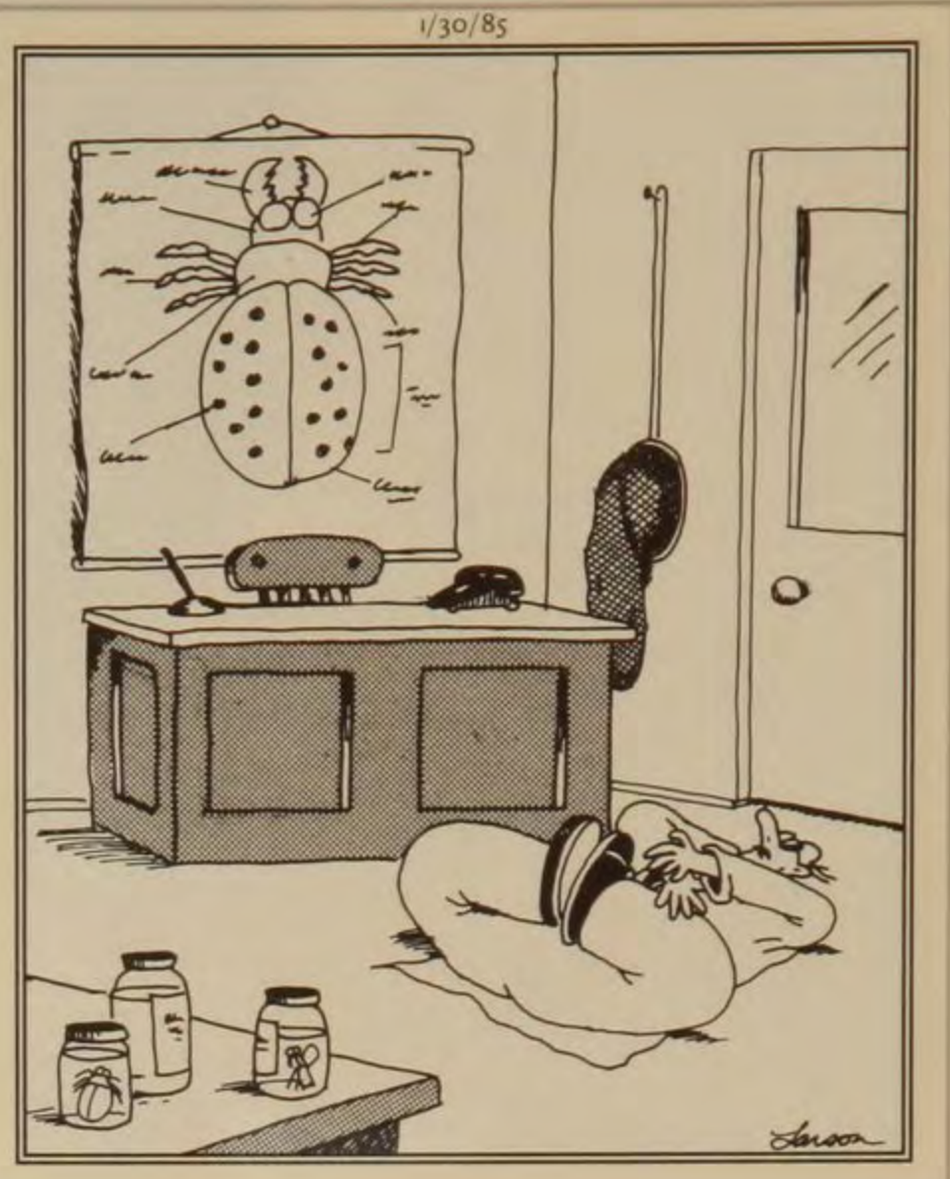
"Oh, for heaven's sake! Your father left in such a hurry this morning he's lost another antenna."

1/21/85

Although an unexplained phenomenon, there is a place on the outskirts of Mayfield, Nebraska, where the sun does not shine.

1/28/85

1/30/85



How entomologists pass away

1/24/85

"Well, I suppose you're all wondering why I've asked you here today. ... Ha! I've always wanted to say that."

1/26/85

"Boy! I'm sooooo full, and this is the laaaaast slice of beef ... guess I'll finish it off, though."

January 1985

1/23/85

"Wait just a gol dang minute here! He's been dealin' from the bottom of the deck, Jake! My pappy always said, 'Never trust a grizzly.'"

1/31/85

"Whoa, back off, Bobby Joe. ... That's just your reflection."

1/25/85

"Well, I laid four Wednesday, three yesterday, and two more today ... of course, George keeps saying we shouldn't count them until they hatch."

1/29/85

"Well, sorry about this, Mrs. Murdoch, but old Roy and I got to arguin' politics, and dang if he didn't say some things that got my adrenaline flowin'."

February 1985

2/1/85

"And what is *this*, Nurse Wilkens? I distinctly asked for the *big* scalpel! ... Big scalpel! Big scalpel!"

2/4/85

"Okay, Baxter, if that's your game, I'll just reach over and push a few of *your* buttons."

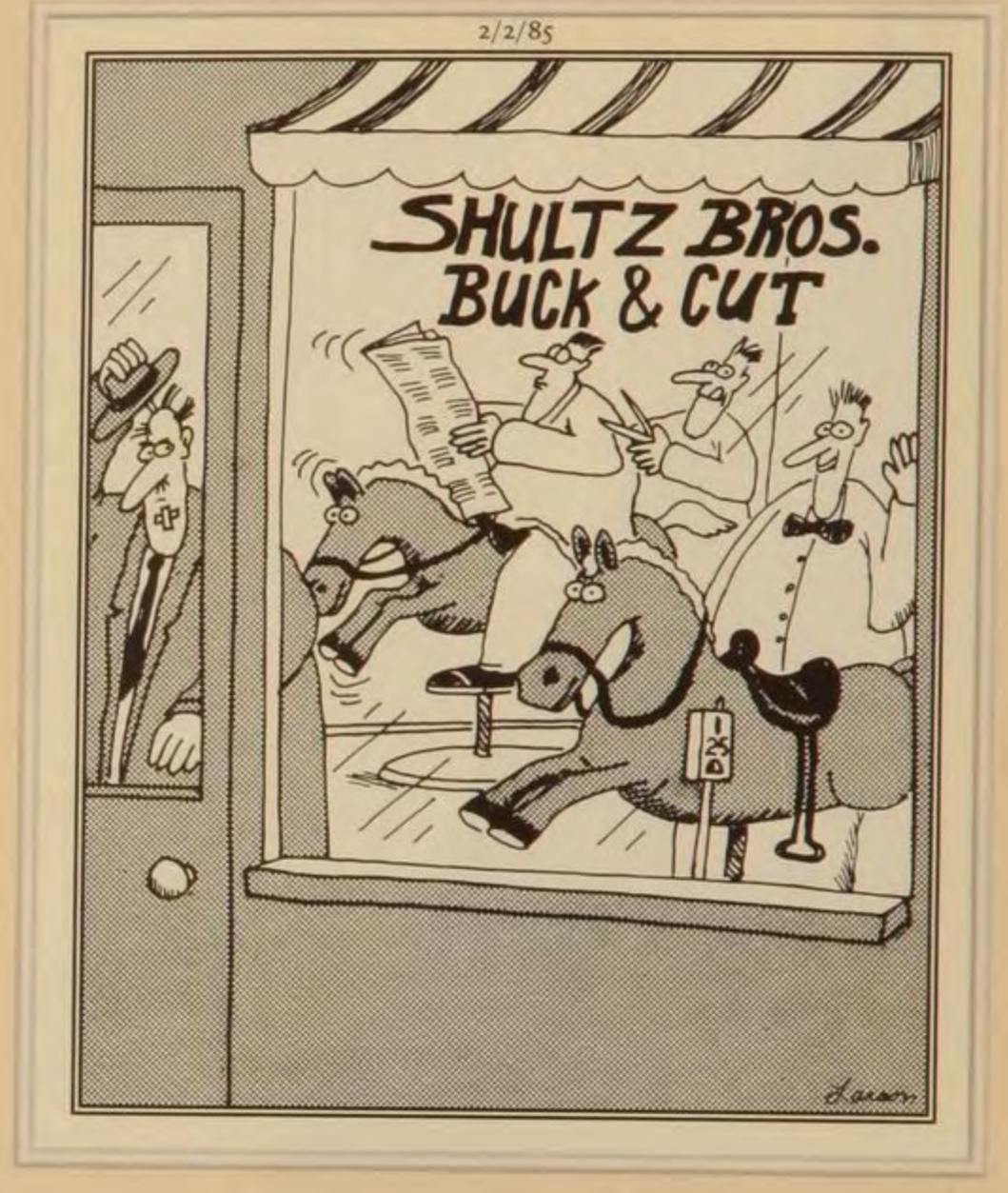
2/5/85

"Well, so that's it. ... I thought he was coming up awfully easy."

2/8/85

February 1985

When snakes trip



"Well, Vern, looks like that buffalo paper you set out this morning is doing the trick."

Birds of prey know they're cool.

February 1985

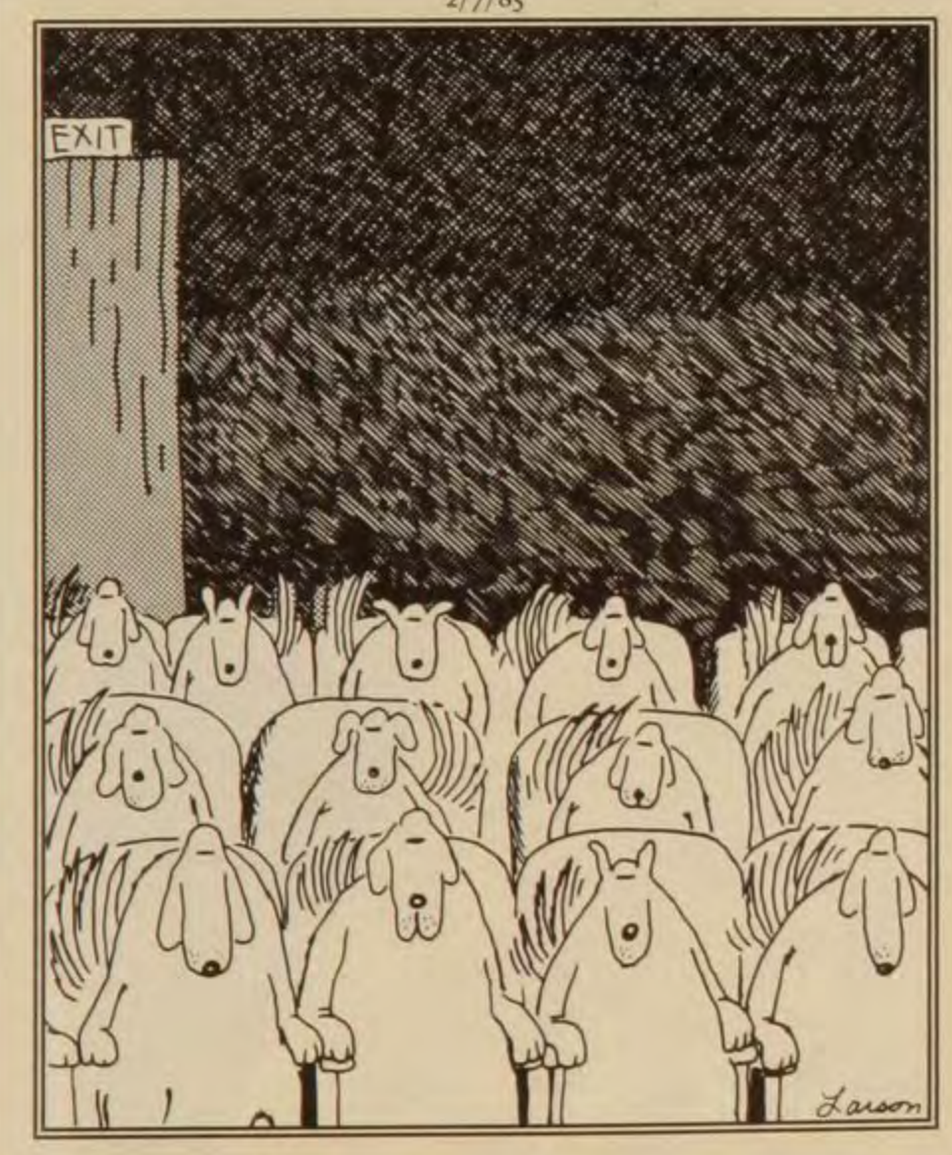
2/18/85

"Well, the Parkers are dead. ... You had to encourage them to take thirds, didn't you?"

2/13/85

"Hey, Sid! Remember that time last summer we were all gathered around the kill like this, someone told a leopard joke, and you laughed so hard an antler came out your nose?"

2/7/85



At the Dog Comedy Film Festival

2/9/85

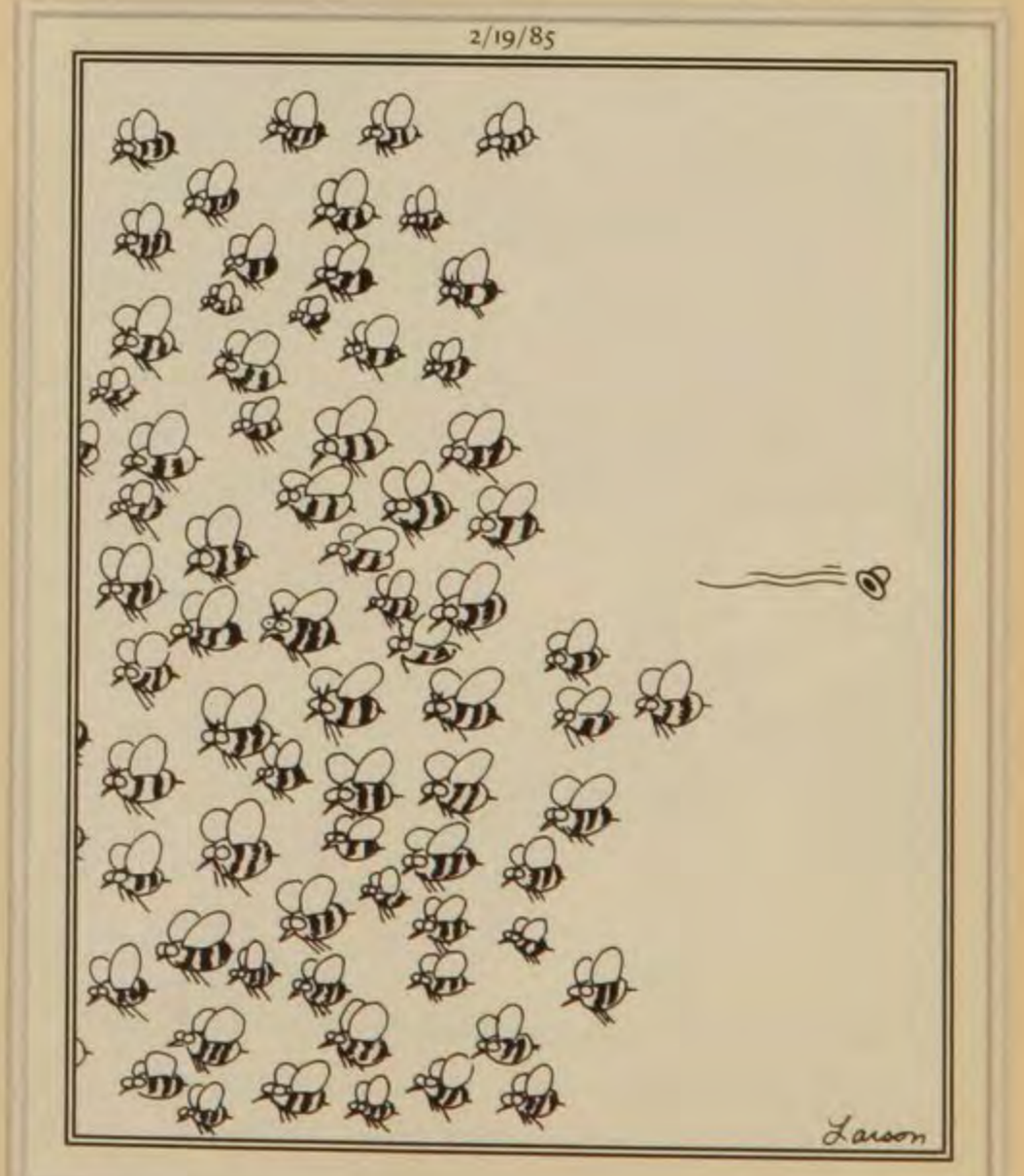
"Hey, Thak. ... You know you move lips when you look at pictures?"

February 1985

Testing whether fish have feelings

"Aw, c'mon, you guys—the cat's away and everyone's so dead serious."

"Well, I'll be. You've snagged some humongous hat, Frank. ... HAHAHAHAHAHA!"



"Dang! My hat!"

February 1985

Taking the family pet for a ride.

"Well, I've got your final grades ready, although I'm afraid not everyone here will be moving up."

"Look at this mob. ... We'll be lucky if there's even a seat cushion left."

"Hey! I think you've hit on something there! Sheep's clothing! Sheep's clothing! ... Let's get out of these gorilla suits!"

February 1985

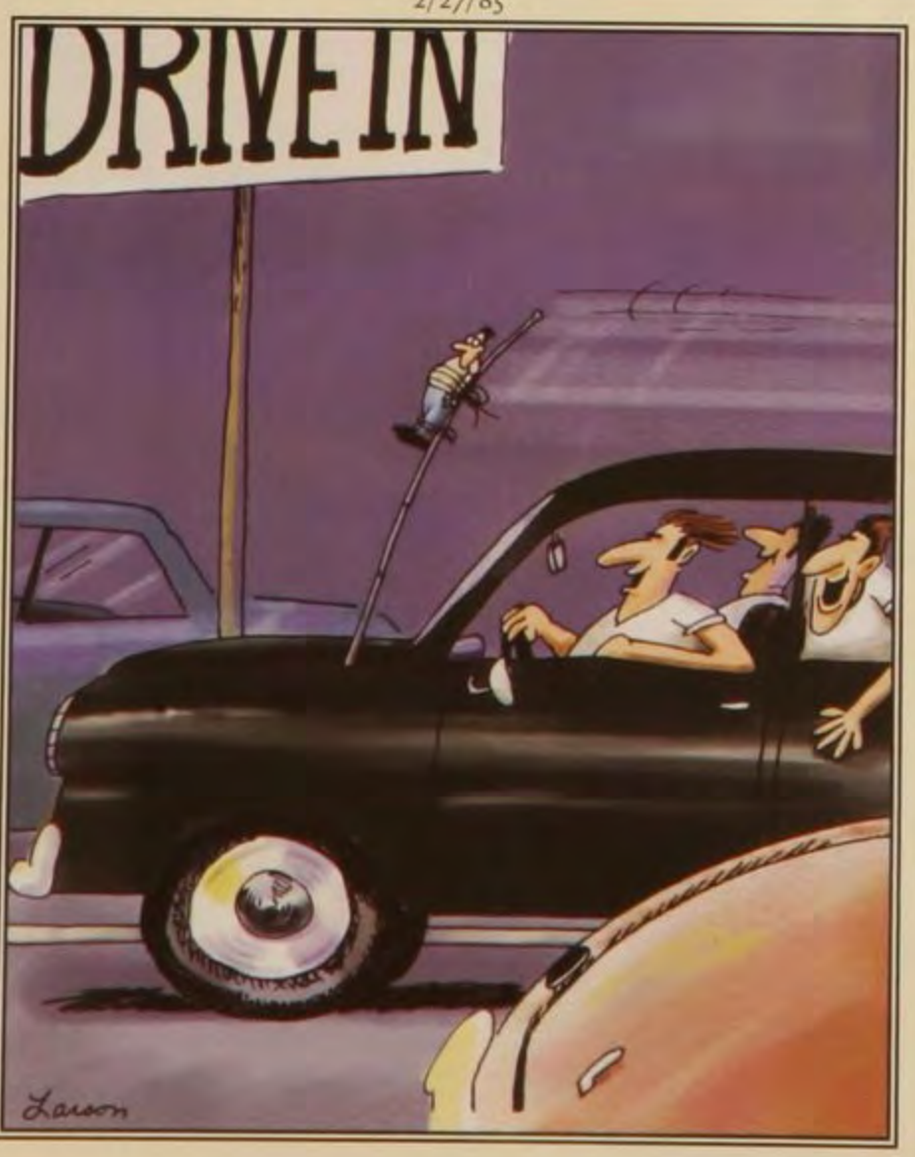
2/23/85

"Bob! You fool! Don't plug that thing in!"

2/26/85

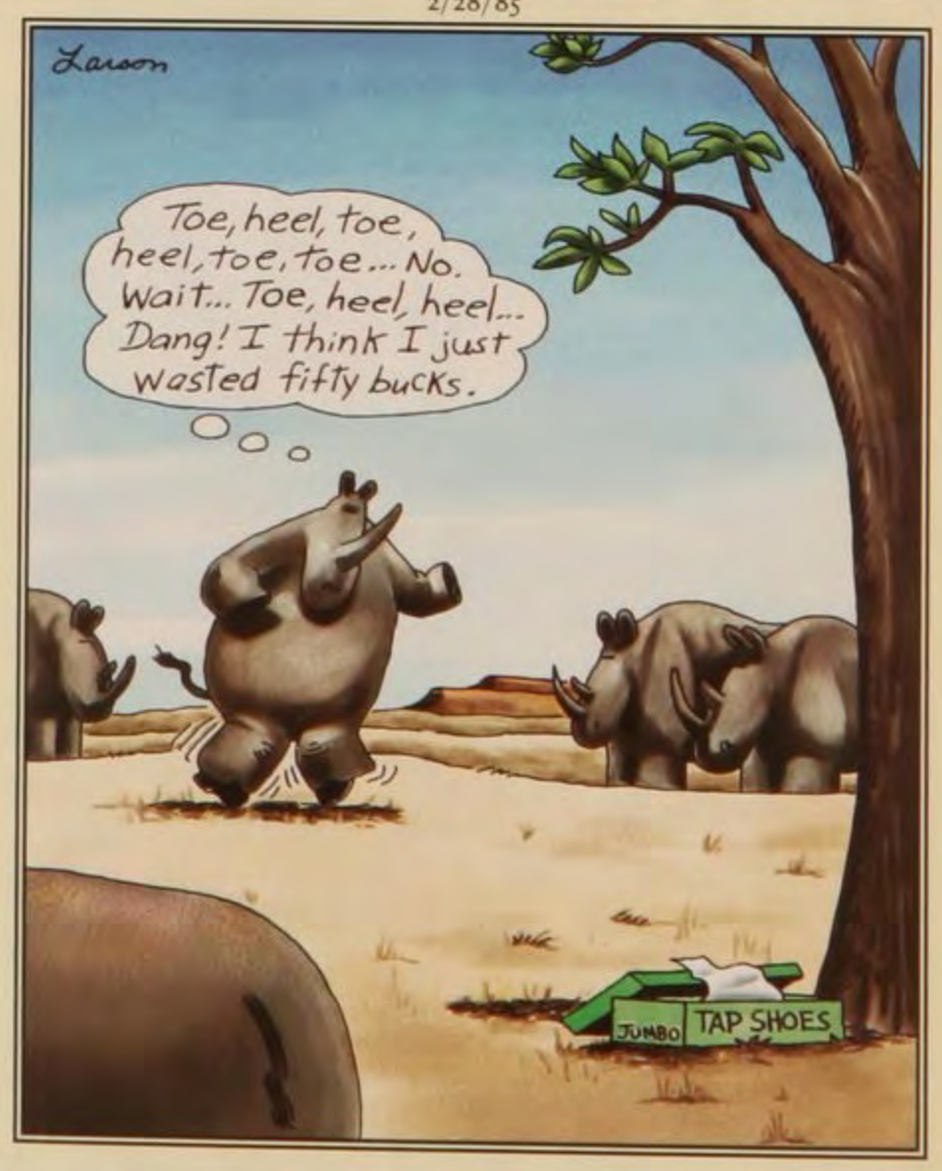
"Well, I don't think so, but I'll ask. Hey, Arlene! Anyone turn in a human brain left here yesterday? ... He says it was medium-sized, sort of bluish-gray."

2/27/85



As the smallest member of the gang, Wendell was used as an attention-getter while cruising for girls.

2/28/85

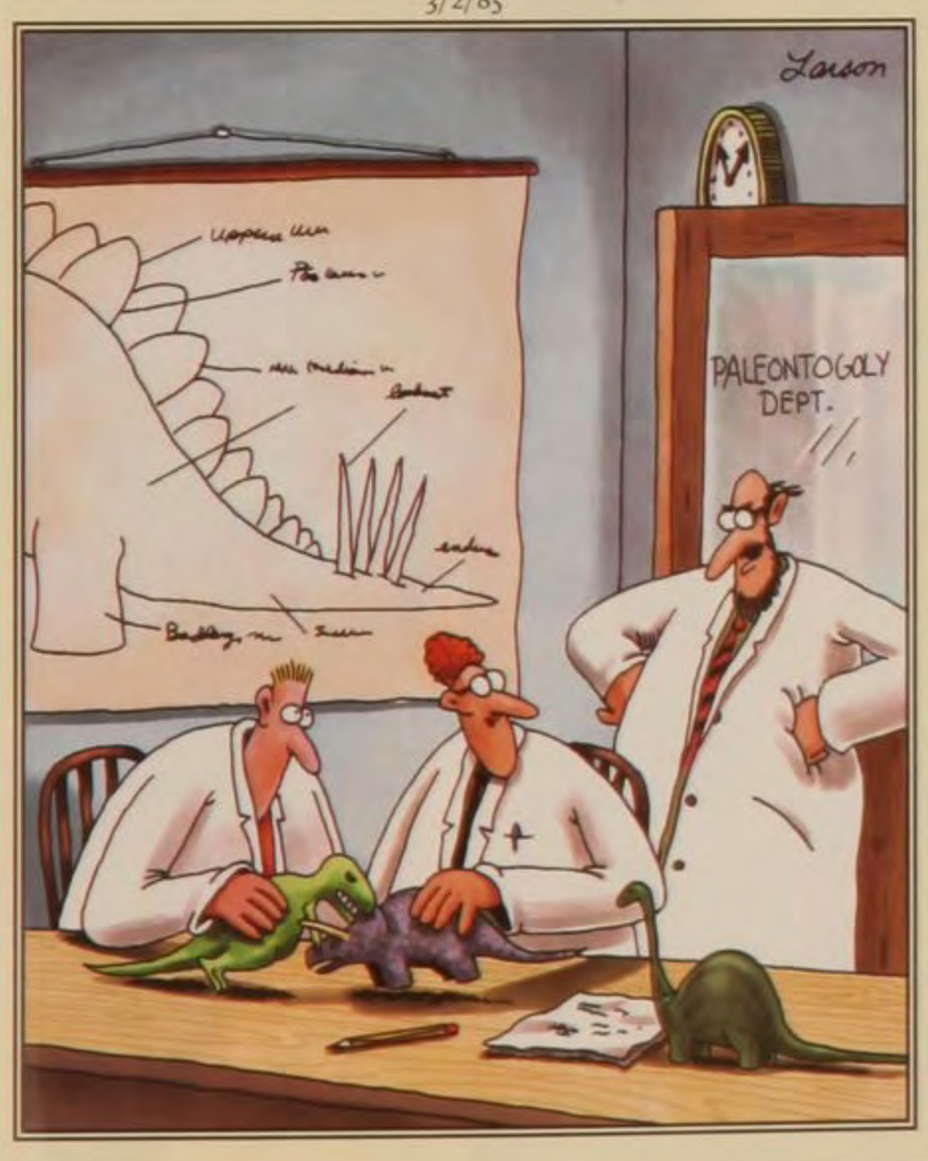


March 1985

3/1/85

"Well, I guess that ain't a bad story—but let me tell you about the time I lost *this!*"

3/2/85



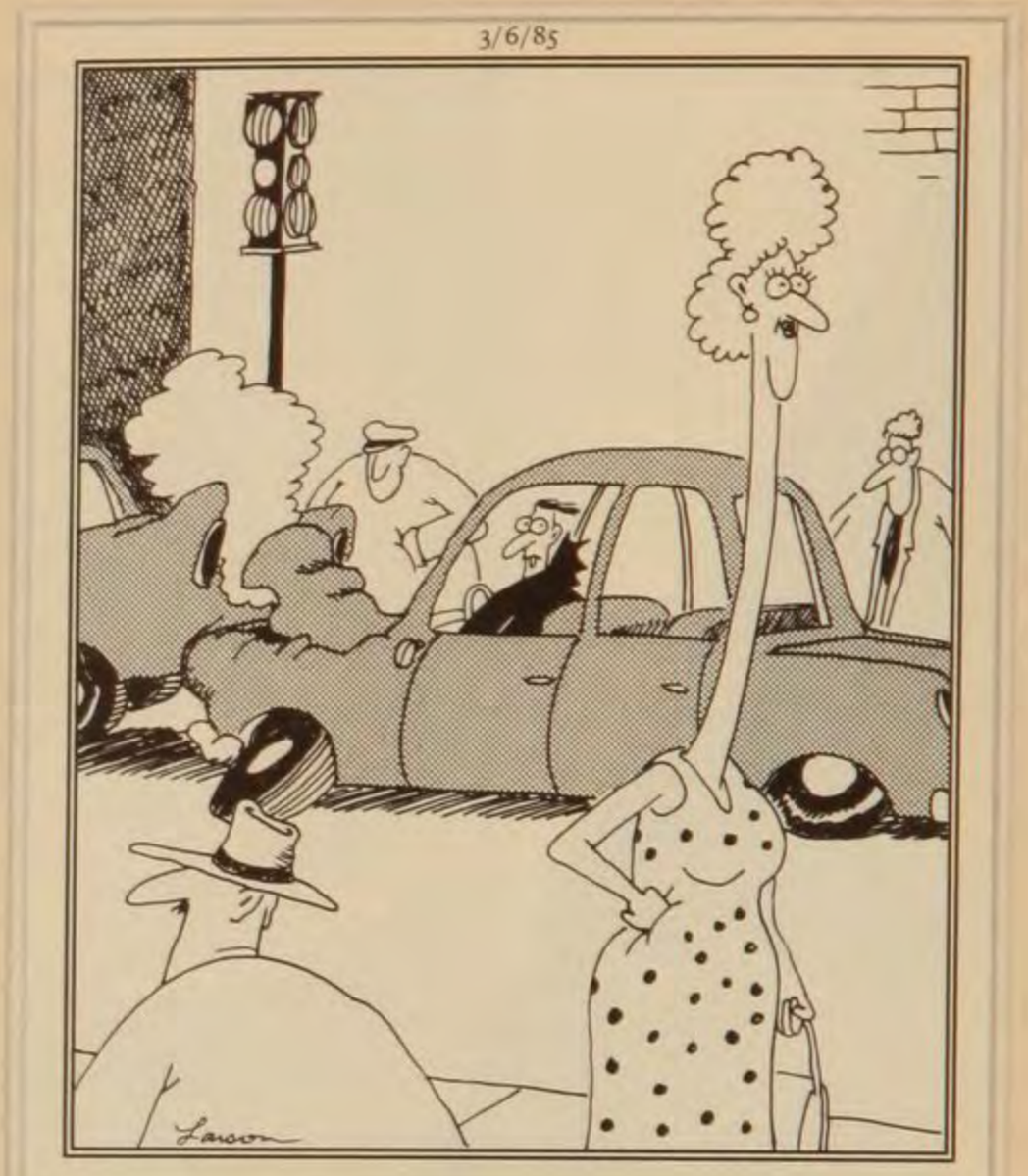
"Cummings! Schneider! You've got plenty of research to work on ... and for the last time, stop playing with those plastic models!"

3/4/85

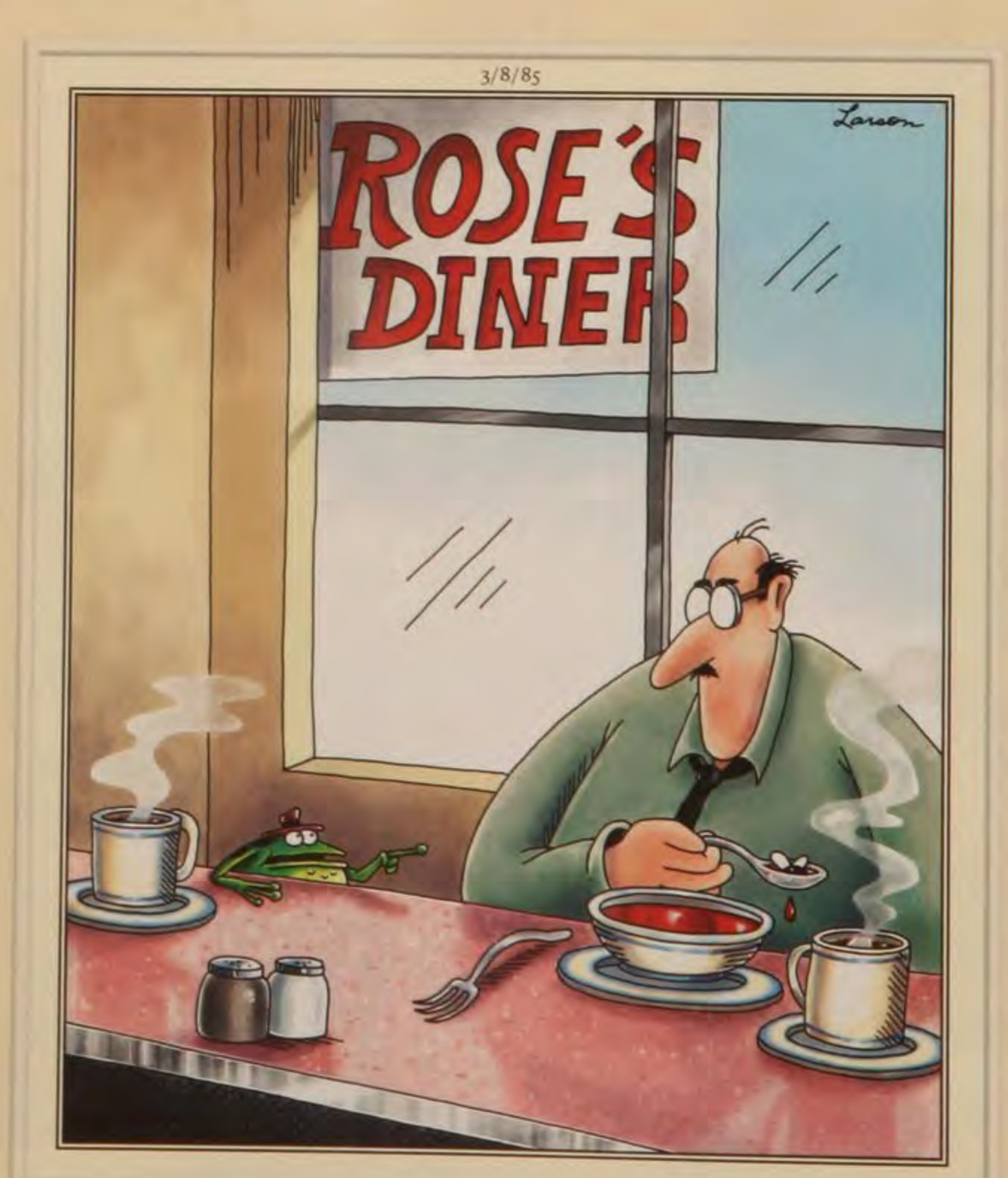
"Well, I warned your father we shouldn't have had that glass window installed."

March 1985

Going out for the evening, Tarzan and Jane forget to tie up the dog.



How vampires have accidents



"I beg your pardon, but you're not planning to just throw that fly away, are you?"

March 1985

"Gad, it gives me the creeps when he does that. I swear that goldfish is possessed or something."

Neanderthal creativity

"What is this? ... Some kind of cruel hoax?"

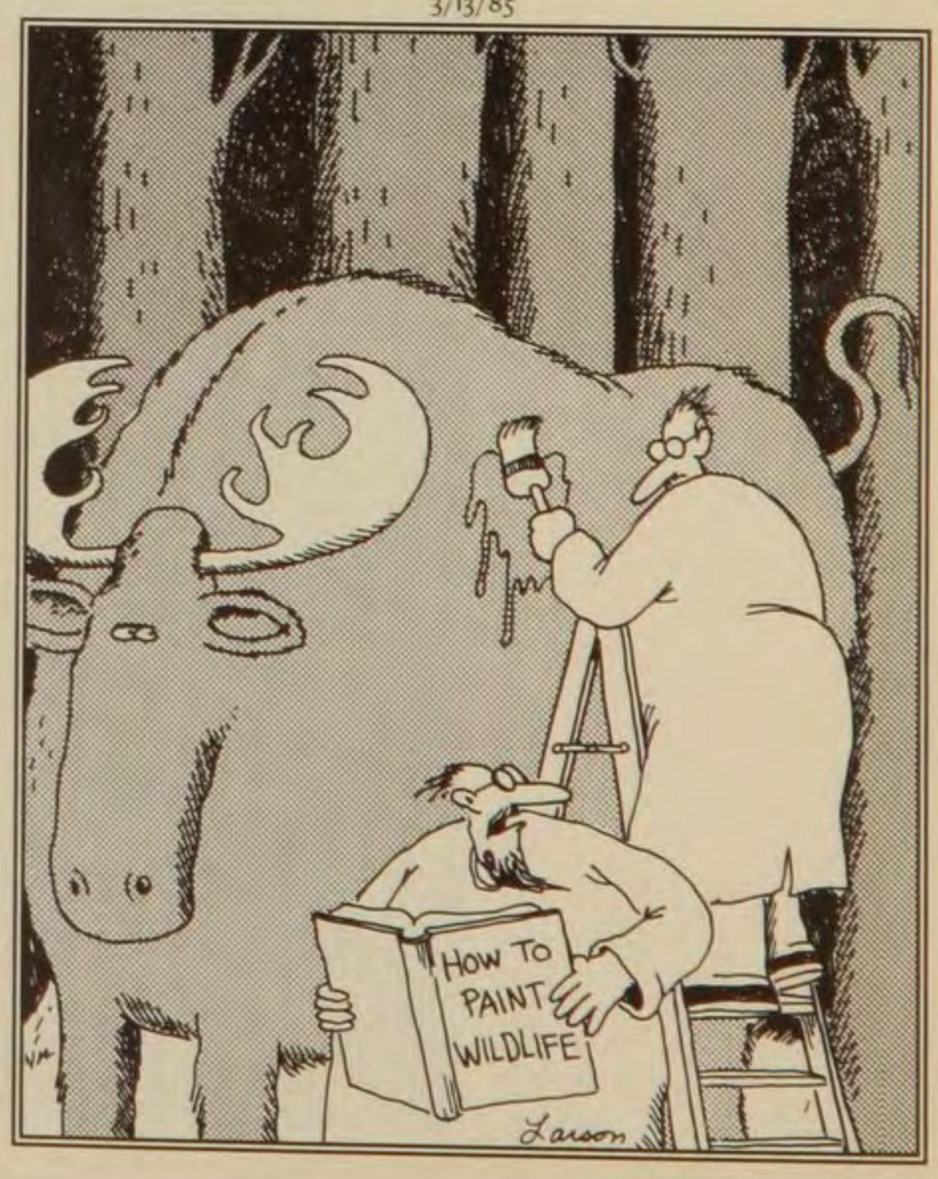
March 1985

3/16/85

3/11/85

"Well, we must face a new reality. No more carefree days of chasing squirrels, running through the park, or howling at the moon. On the other hand, no more 'Fetch the stick, boy, fetch the stick.'"

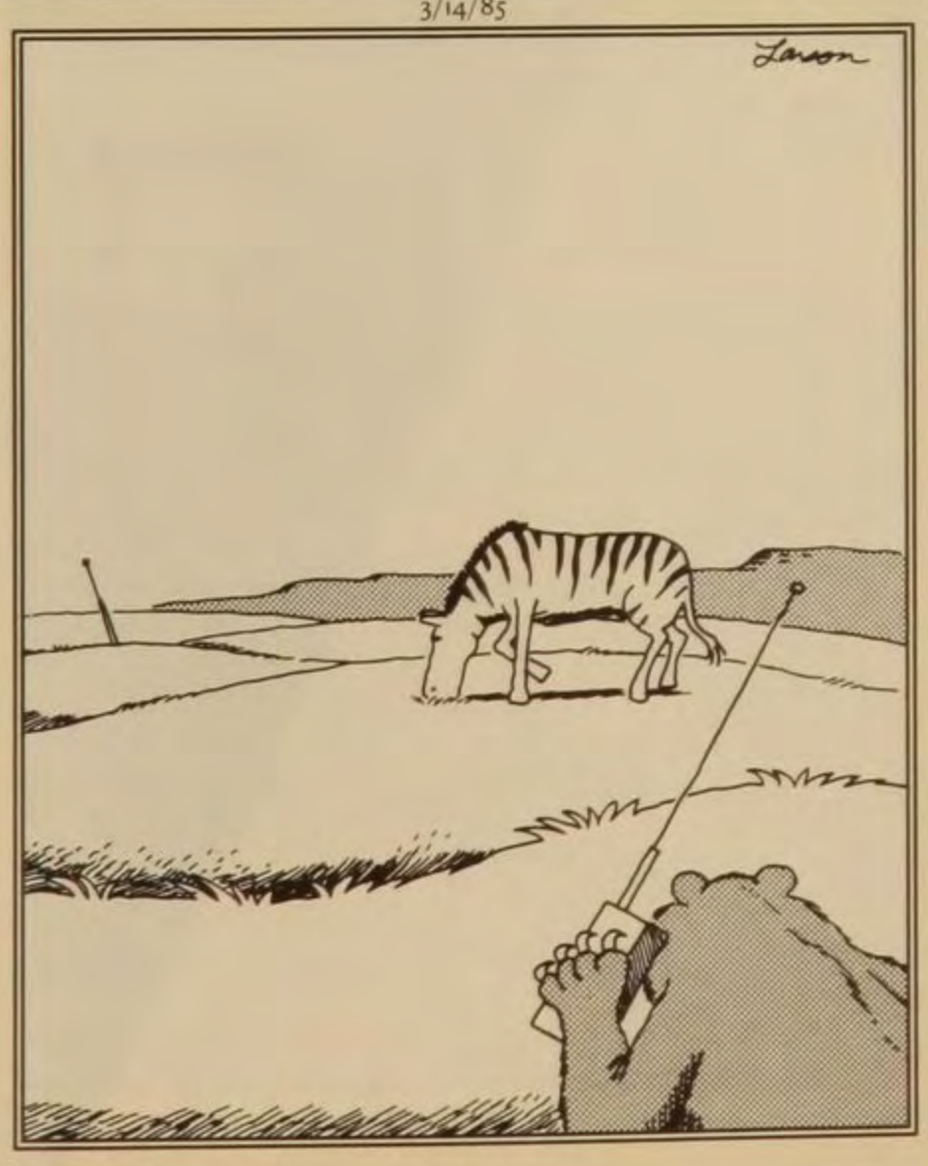
3/13/85



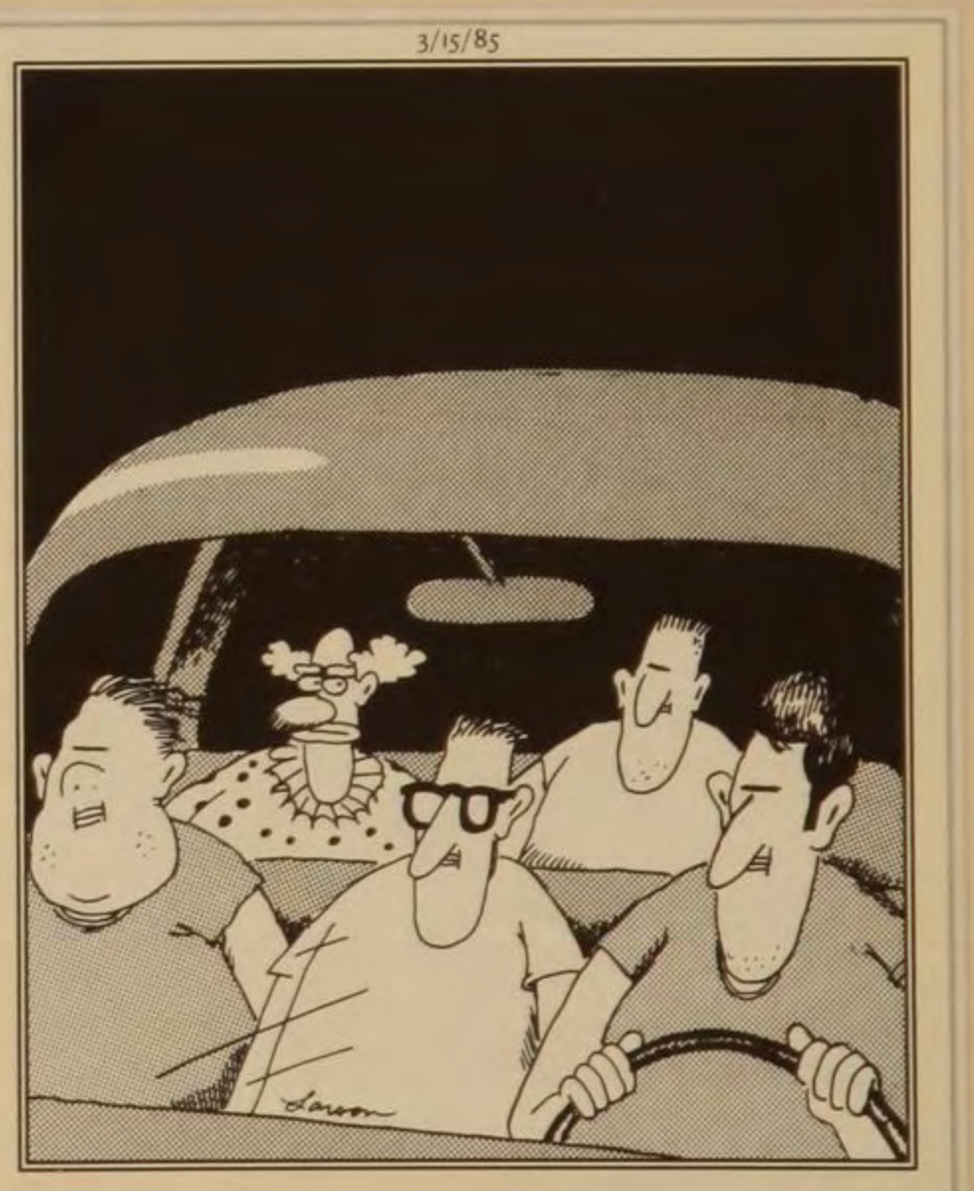
"Hold on there, Dale. It says we should sand between coats."

March 1985

"See how the vegetation has been trampled flat here, Jimmy? That tells me where a deer bedded down for the night. After a while, you'll develop an eye for these things yourself."



The modern lion



Deep inside, Brian wondered if the other guys really listened to his ideas or regarded him only as comic relief.

March 1985

3/18/85

Roger screws up.

3/19/85

"The fuel light's on, Frank! We're all going to die! ... Wait, wait. ... Oh, my mistake—that's the intercom light."

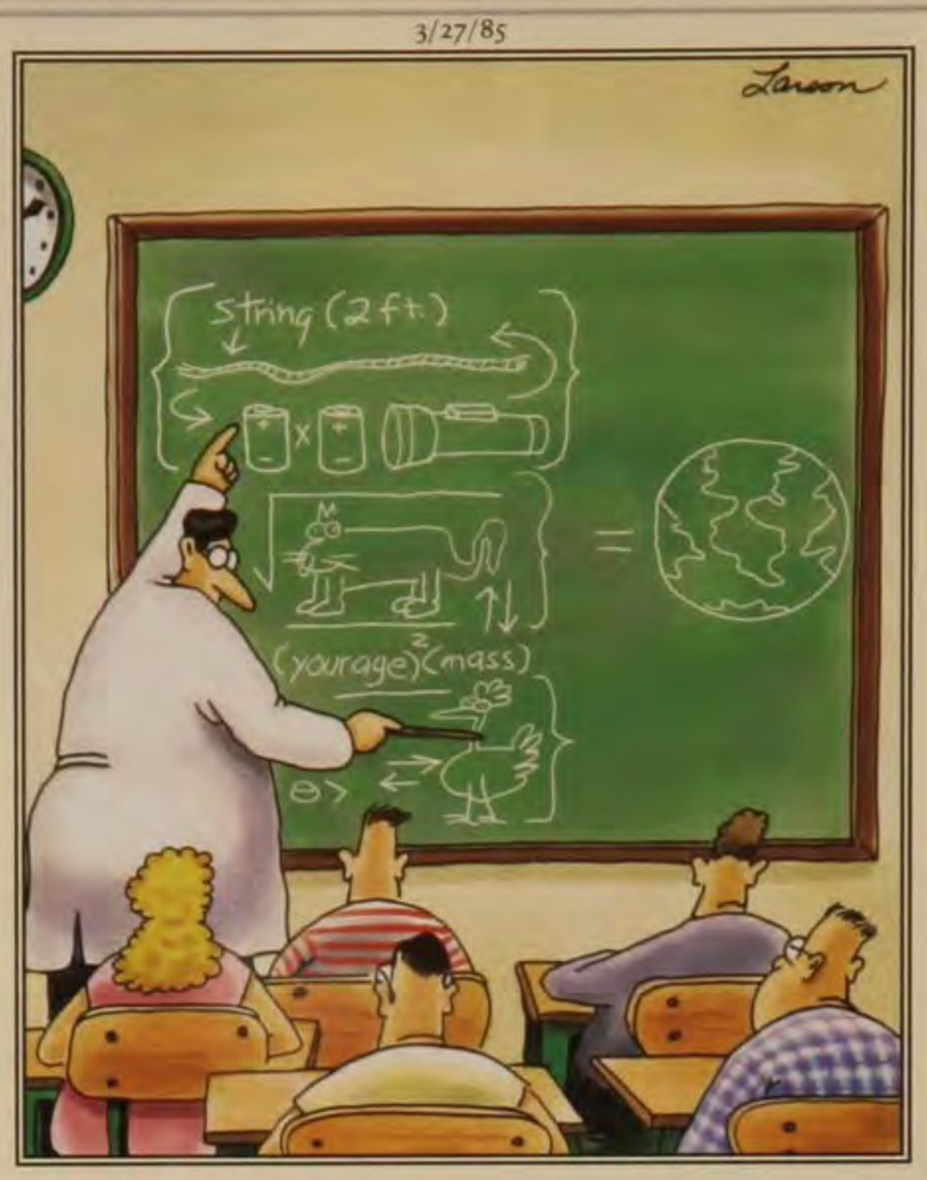
3/23/85

"Now you listen to me, Miss Billings! You have not seen a thing here—do you understand? I'm not kidding about this, Miss Billings."

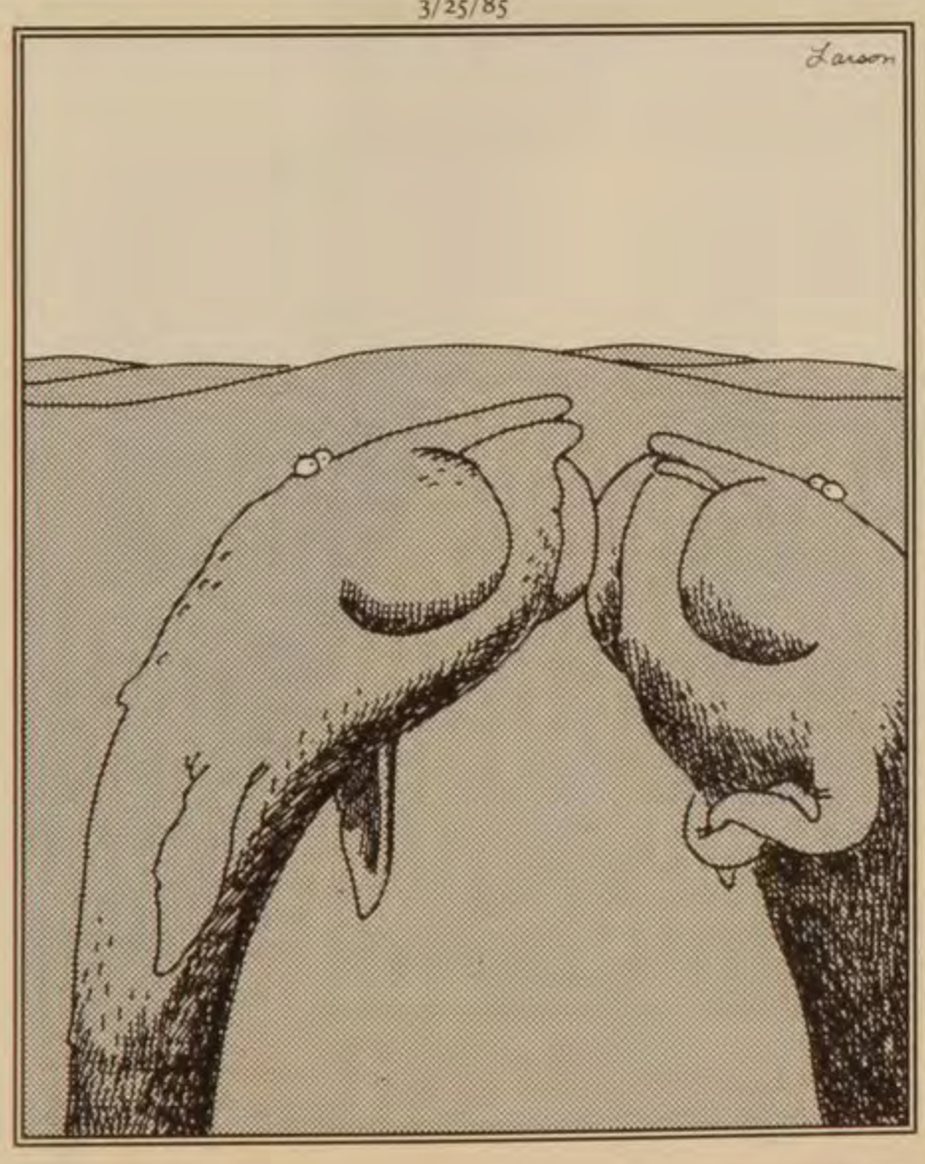
3/21/85

Ed and Barbara are visited by the insects of the Amazon Basin.

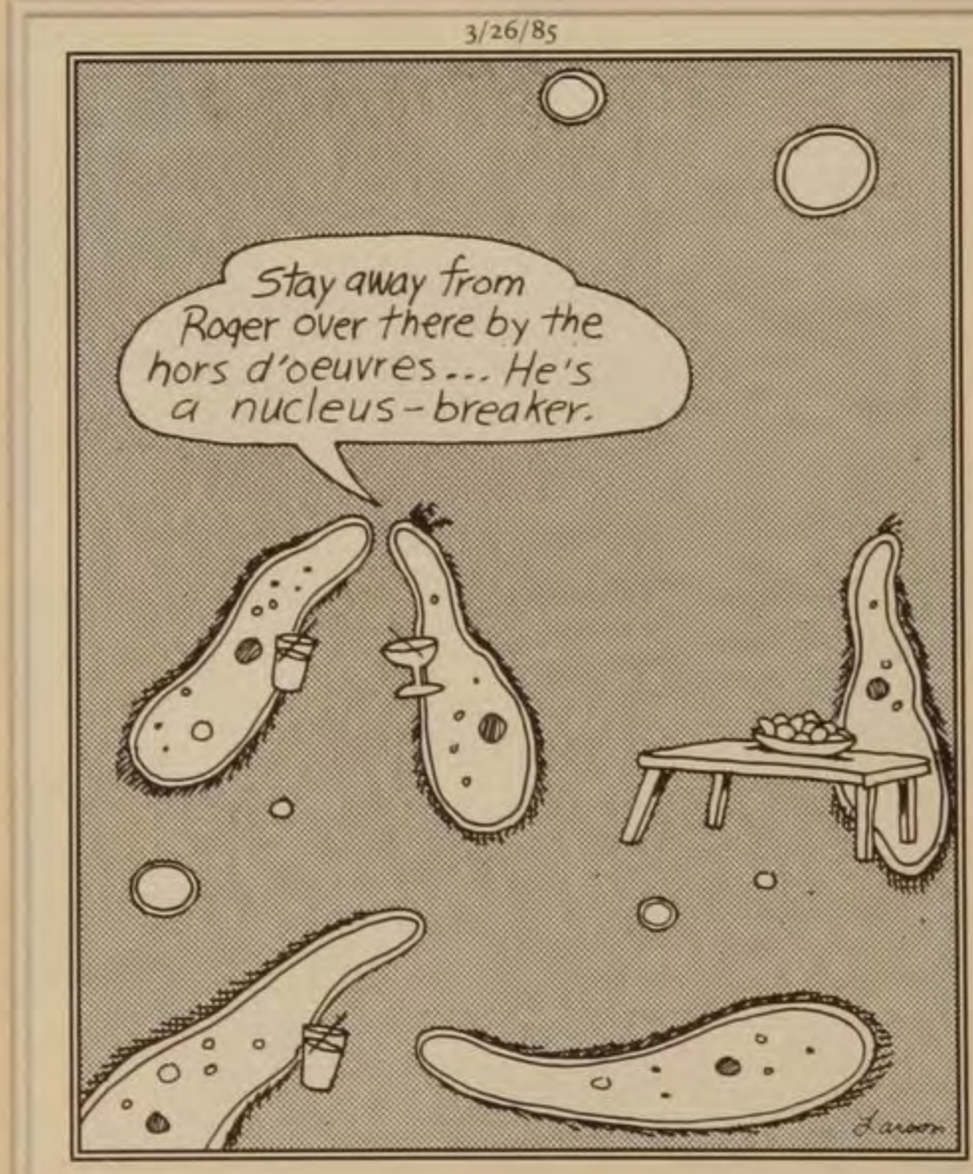
March 1985



Creationism explained



Whale breath-holding contests



Protozoan gossip

March 1985

3/28/85

The termite queen in her egg chamber

3/29/85

Disaster befalls Professor Schnabel's cleaning lady when she mistakes his time machine for a new dryer.

3/30/85

April 1985

4/1/85

"Get, you rascal! Get! ... Heaven knows how he keeps getting in here, Betty, but you better count 'em."

Journal Tribune, Biddeford, Maine, 11/17/86

He's definitely not a fan of 'The Far Side'

I have never written to a newspaper before to complain but I feel compeled. The "Far Side" cartoon is anything but a cartoon and is purely "sick" in its presentation. Never in any paper have I seen such poor taste.

I would suggest you discontinue same.

We have enjoyed the paper since we moved here eight years ago. The contents are informative and entertaining — that is why I was somewhat surprised that you would degenerate same with "The Far Side"

Thank you for the privilege of expressing myself.

Mervin Sedlar
Old Orchard Beach

Misses the 'Menace'

Why has the Journal Tribune discarded excellent art-work, all the interesting and family-oriented people, delightful humor and the impish "Dennis the Menace"?

Is it possible that the ugly and sloppy drawing, the insensitive characters, and the pseudo-sophisticated "humor" of "The Far Side" are now your standards for your readers?

Is "The Far Side" just another prime example of far from art, beauty and intelligence — and do we need it?

Pauline Whitcomb Hess
Ogunquit

Herald Statesman, Yonkers, N.Y.
11/12/86

Distasteful comics

I am disappointed that you have replaced some good, old-fashioned and humorous cartoons with distasteful ones. For example, "The Far Side" by Larson is not funny, just lacking in good taste. "Calvin and Hobbs" by Watterson could be more acceptable if made less offensive (at times). "Doonesbury" and "Bloom County," I suppose, reflect our times. Far better for our newspaper to be working to change what is so unacceptable to us all in these times. Many other cartoons are funny, likable and reflective of the real and good in our country.

MARY KOHLER
Yonkers

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.
10/21/86

'Far Side' not welcome here

To the editor:

I have enjoyed reading the *Argus Leader* for several years, and as a general rule, have been pleased with most aspects of your coverage and layout. Prior to this time, I have not felt a need to address you personally about any differences or dislikes regarding your paper.

I am writing at this time to tell you that I feel that it was very bad judgment, or worse than that, to incorporate the comic, *The Far Side* into your paper. For an area of the country that prides itself in its clean, wholesome, country, family-oriented atmosphere, an item such as this which is so totally morally and religiously degrading should not, and cannot, be tolerated. I do Hope that this item will soon be eliminated from our paper, and thank you for your consideration in this matter.

— Pete Hoogendoorn
Inwood, Iowa

4/2/85

"No way. I'll put *my* magazine down when you put yours down."

4/3/85

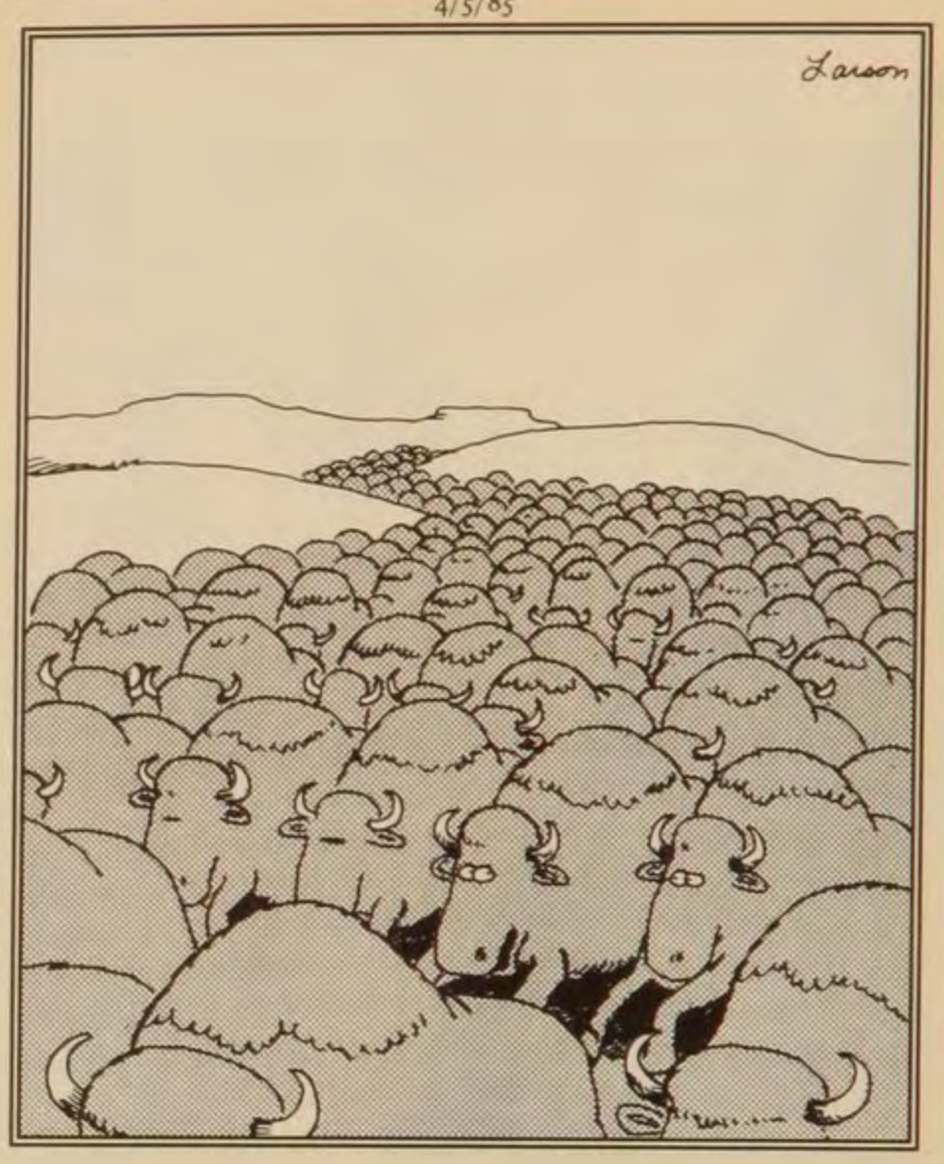
How locusts are incited to swarm

April 1985

4/4/85

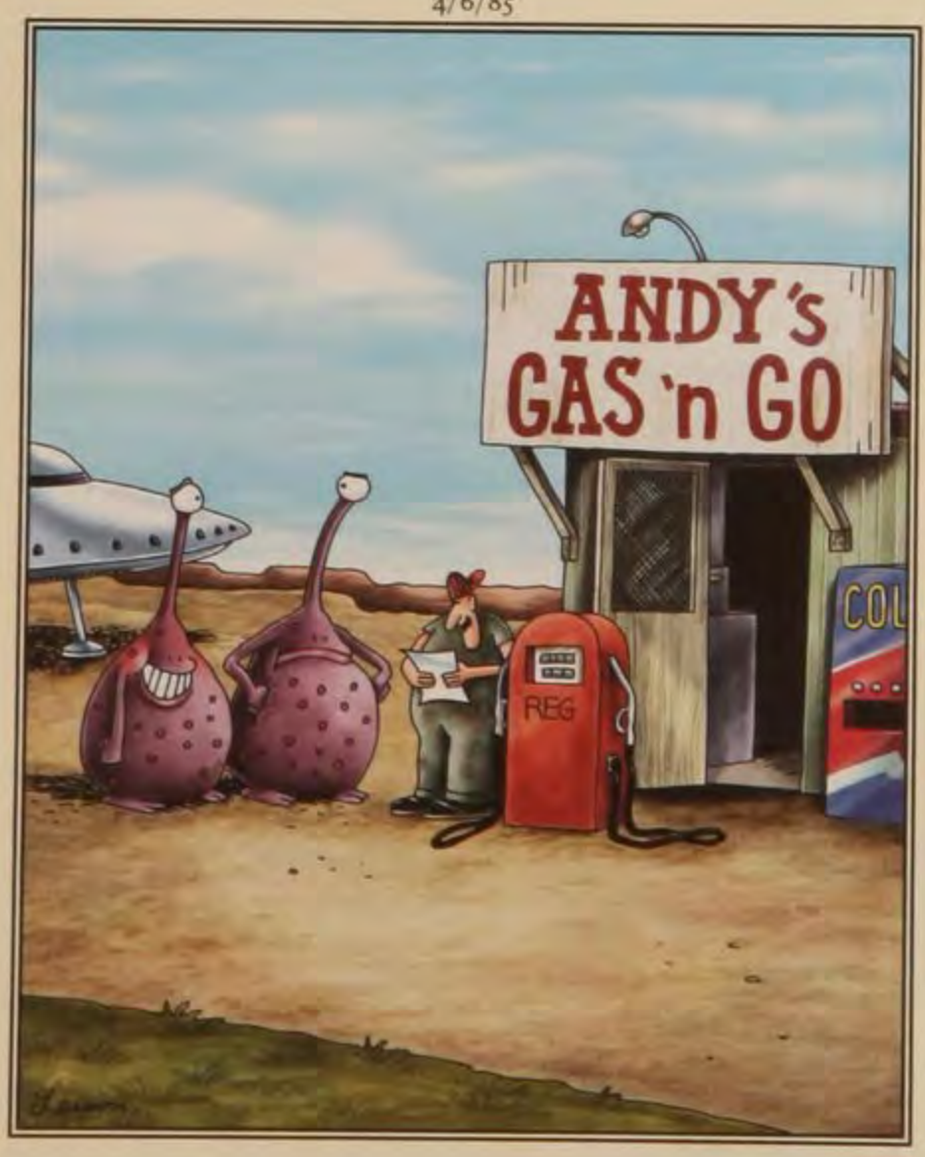
At the Porcupine Ball

4/5/85



"As if we all knew where we're going."

4/6/85

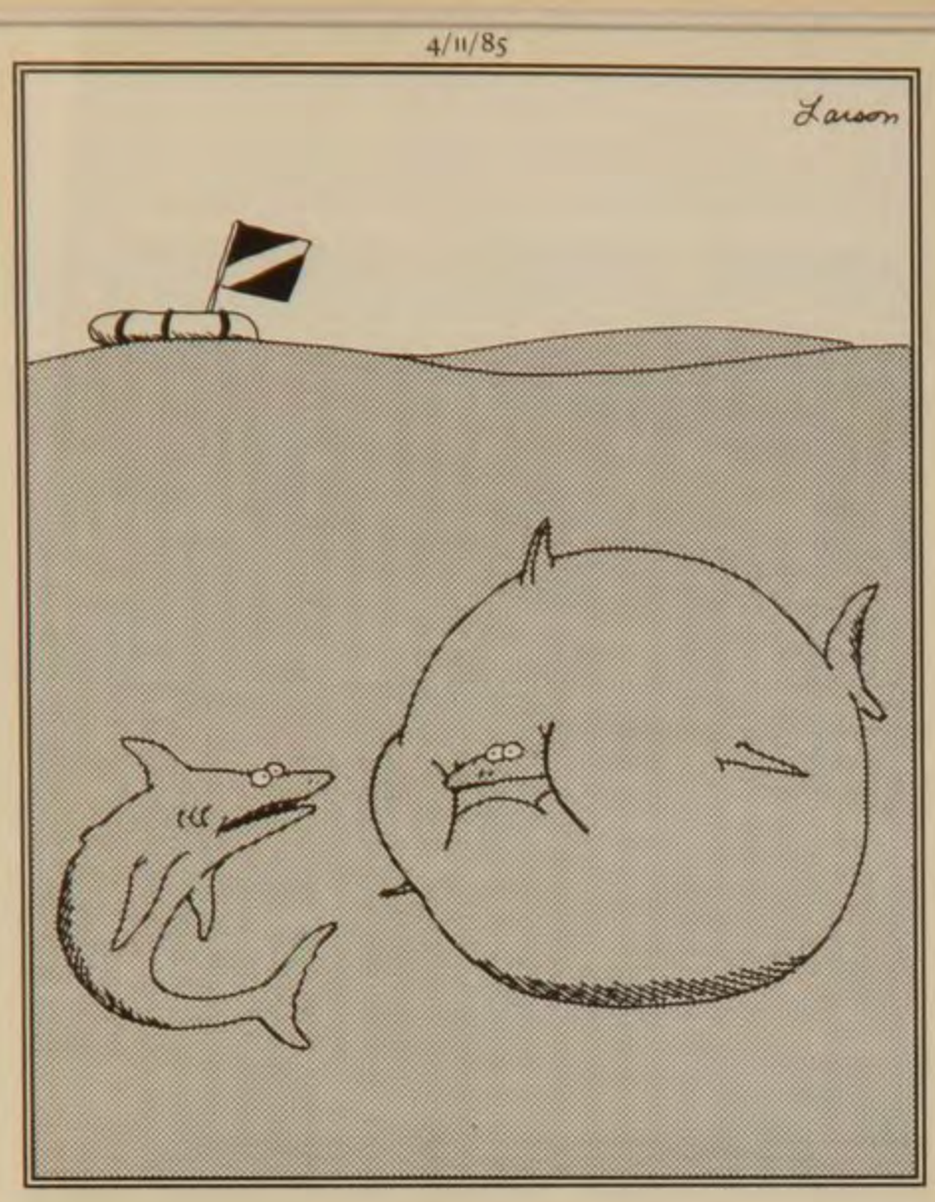


"Shoot! You not only got the wrong planet, you got the wrong *solar* system! ... I mean, a wrong planet I can understand—but a whole solar system?"

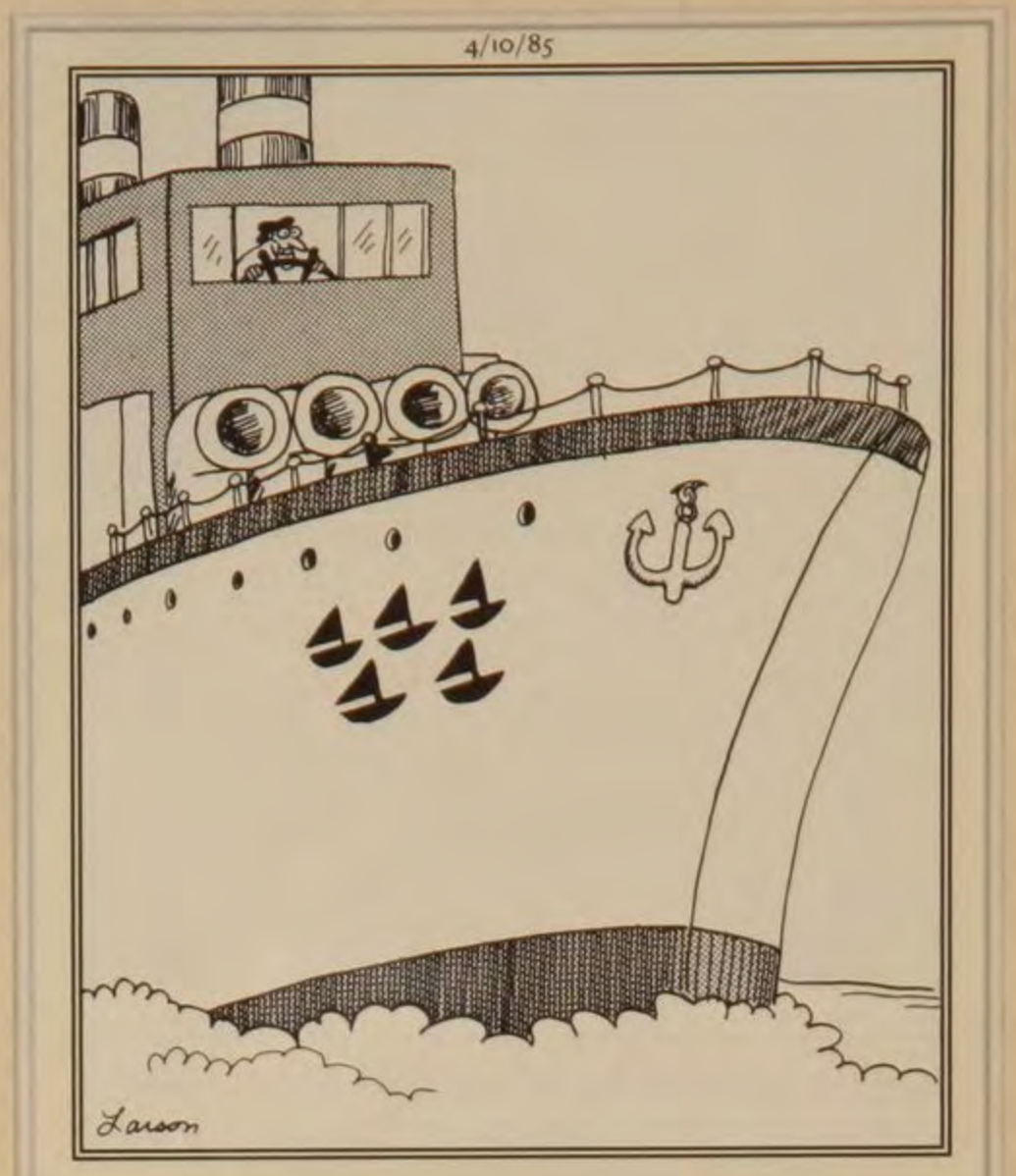
4/8/85

"It's the Websters. They say there's some pitiful thing dying of thirst out their way, and would we like to come over?"

April 1985



"Well, Vinnie, that's one of the inherent risks of ingesting scuba gear."



"Great. ... Just great, you imbecile! I've been floating here for hours like a harmless log and you come up and start talking to me!"

"Doreen! There's a spider on you! One of those big, hairy, brown ones with the long legs that can move like the wind itself!"

April 1985

"Crimony! Kevin's oozing his way up onto the table. ... Some slugs have a few drinks and just go nuts!"

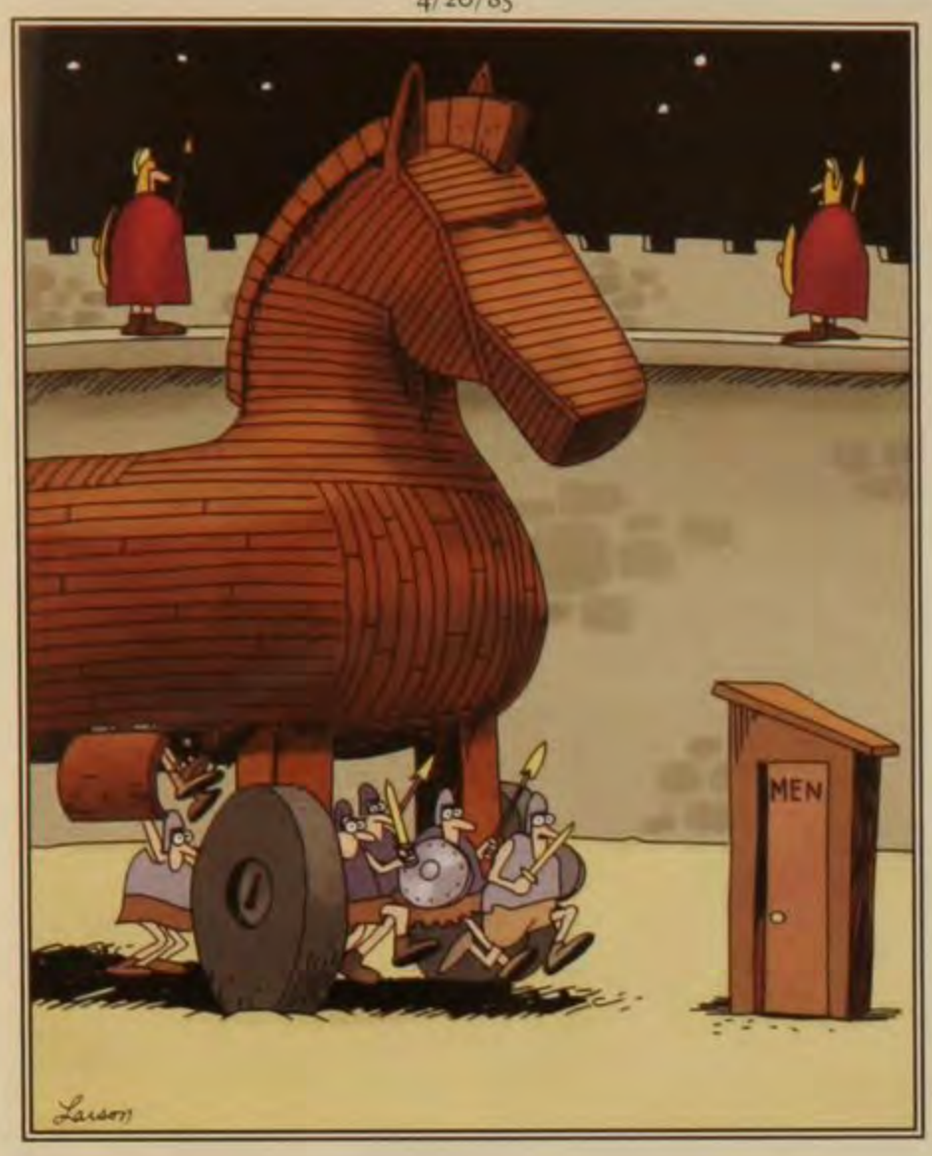
"You know, I have a confession to make, Bernie. Win or lose, I love doing this."

"Listen! The authorities are helpless! If the city's to be saved, I'm afraid it's up to us! *This is our hour!*"

Toby vs. Godzilla

April 1985

4/20/85



4/13/85

"Watch out for that tree, you idiot! ... And *now* you're on the wrong side of the road. Crimony! You're driving like you've been pithed or something."

4/18/85

"And don't give me that 'I'm only bird-watching' line."

4/24/85

As Thak worked frantically to start a fire, a Cro-Magnon man, walking erect, approached the table and simply gave Theena a light.

April 1985

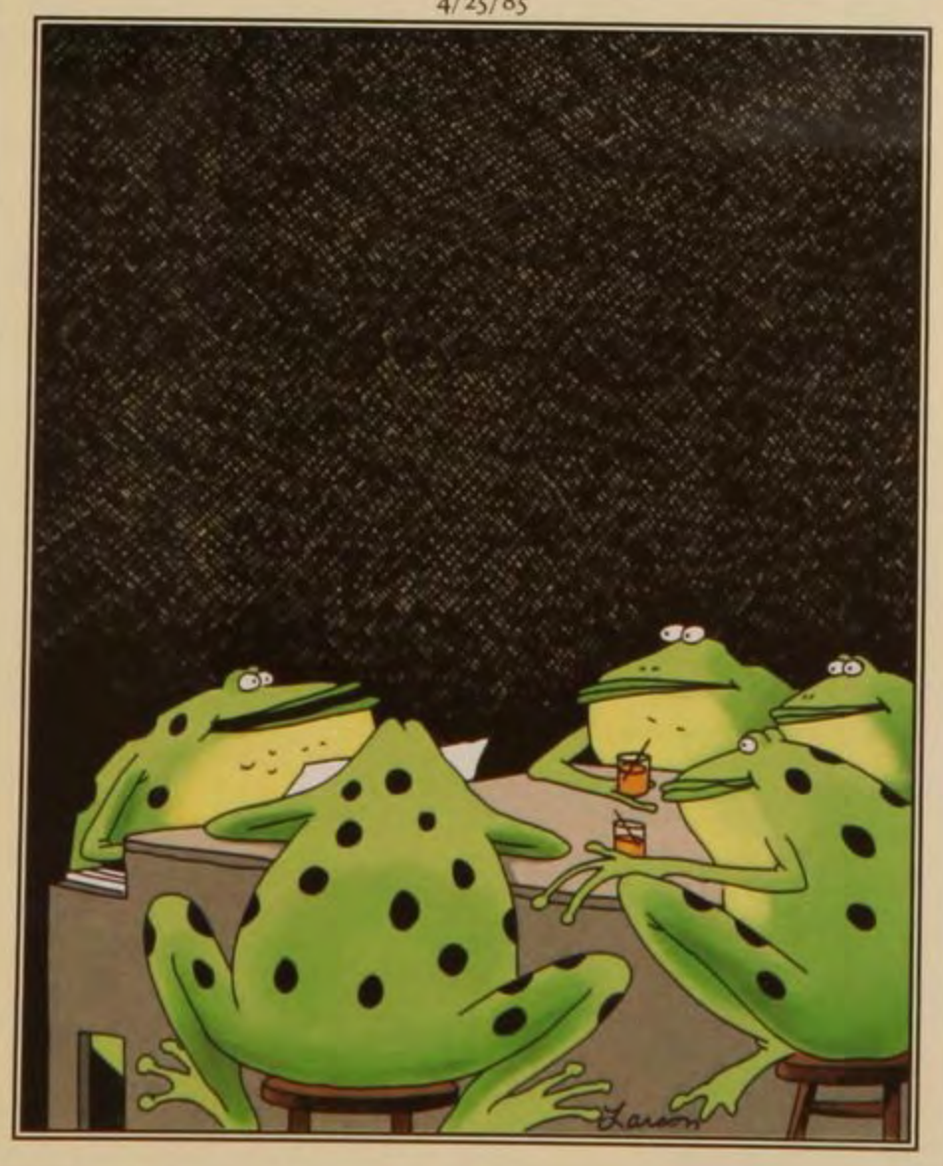
4/22/85

Danny shows off his sheep's brain.

4/23/85

"Hey, Barry—in the back row—new kid."

4/25/85



"Okay. Here's another little ditty we can all sing. ... Of course, as always, the only words are 'ribbit, ribbit, ribbit.'"

4/26/85

"Well, here comes Roy again. ... He sure does think he's Hell on Wheels."

April 1985

"You idiot! I said get the room freshener! That's the insecticide!"

"Aaaaaa! Here they come again, Edgar! ... Crazy carnivores!"

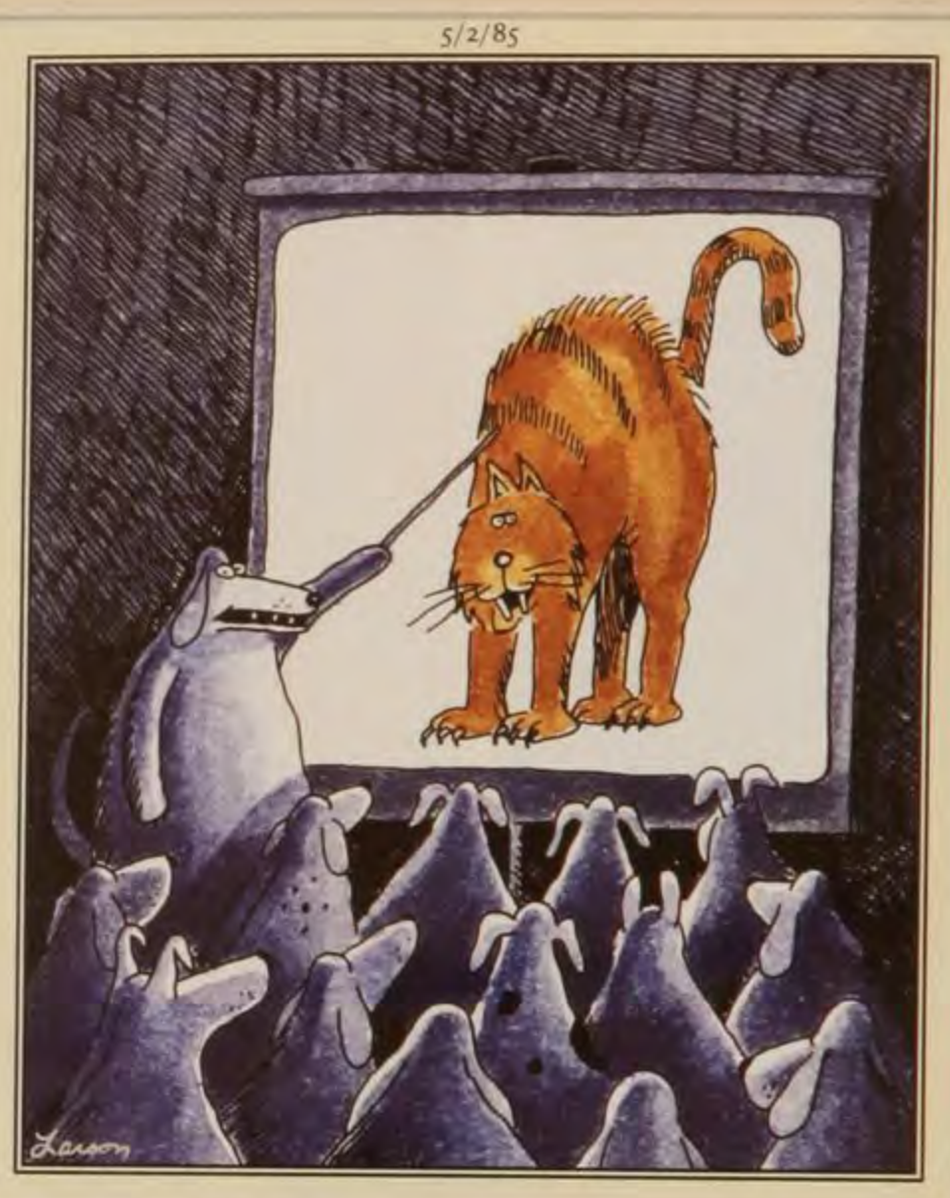
How snakes say goodbye

May 1985

5/1/85

"Look, just relax, son ... relaaaaaaaax ... I'm gonna come over there now and you can just hand me your gun. ... Everything's gonna be reeeal cool, son."

5/2/85



"Now, in this slide we can see how the cornered cat has seemed to suddenly grow bigger. ... Trickery! Trickery! Trickery!"

5/4/85

"So what do you guys want? My watch? Money? ... I got *nothin'!*"

5/11/85

May 1985

5/3/85

"... four ... five ... six ... Oh, heck—
just turn and shoot."

5/6/85

"One more thing, young man. You get my
daughter home before sunrise—I don't
want you coming back here with a pile
of dried bones!"

5/13/85

"Civilization-slickers."

5/14/85

God loses a contact lens.

5/7/85

French mammoth

5/8/85

"Bob, do you think I'm sinking? ... Be honest."

5/9/85

May 1985

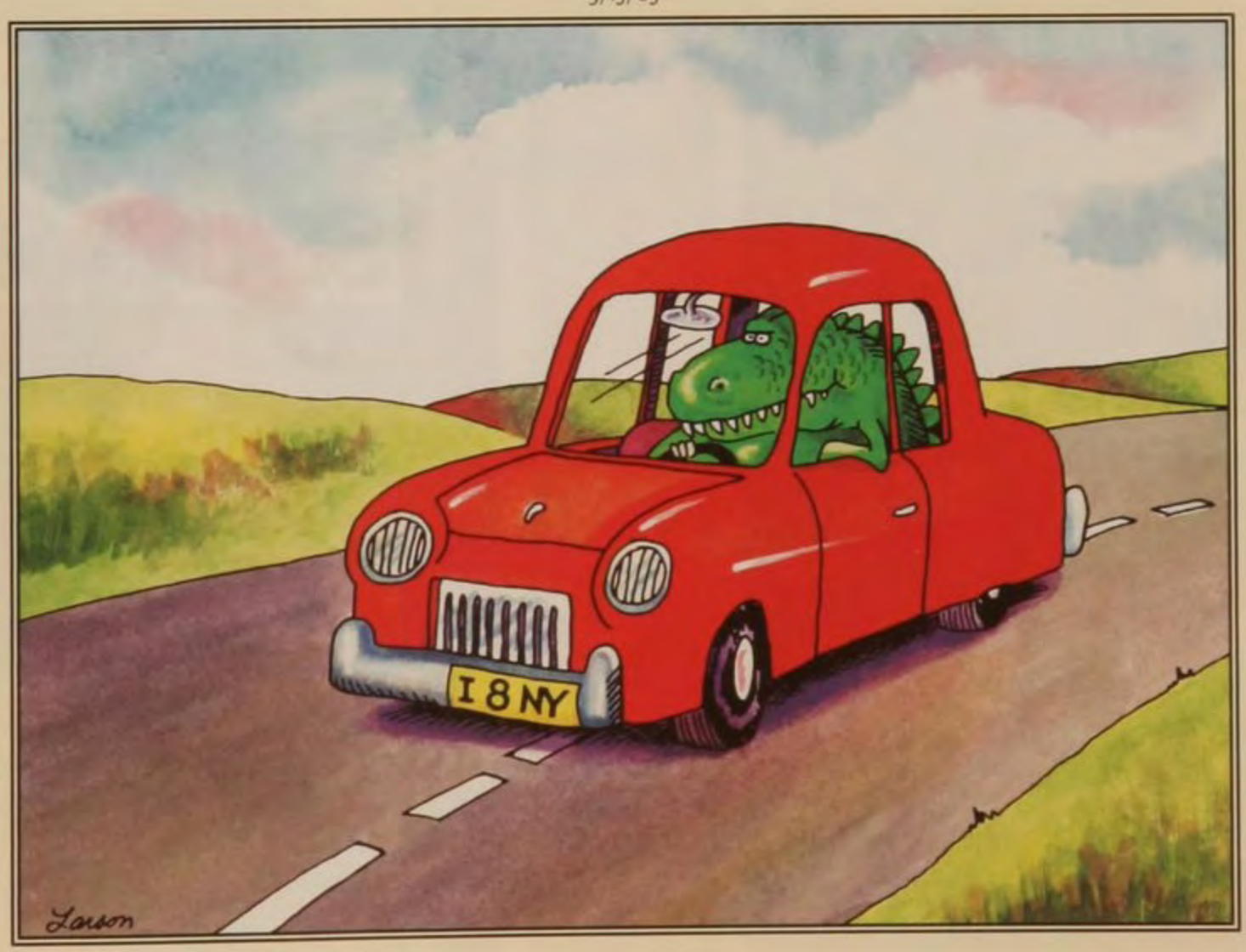
5/10/85

"And as the net slooooooowly lifted him from the water, the voice kept whispering, *'I want your legs. ... I waaaaant your legs.'*"

5/16/85

"Dad! Find out if they have cable!"

5/15/85



May 1985

5/18/85

"Hey, hey, hey! Are you folks nuts? I'm telling you, *this* is the car for you!"

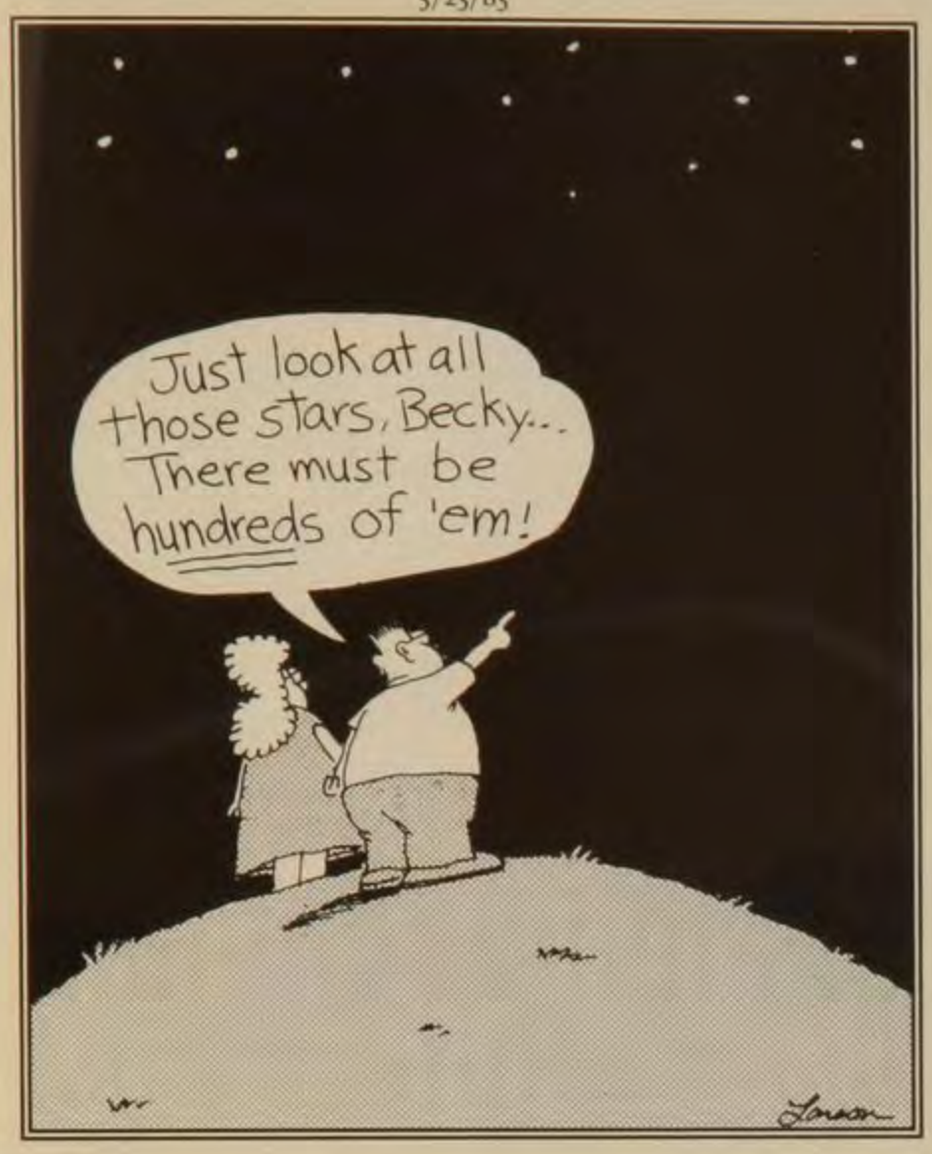
5/20/85

"For crying out loud, gentlemen! That's us! Someone's installed the one-way mirror in backwards!"

5/22/85

"That's right, the 49th floor! ... And you better hurry—she's hanging by a thread!"

5/23/85



Carl Sagan as a kid

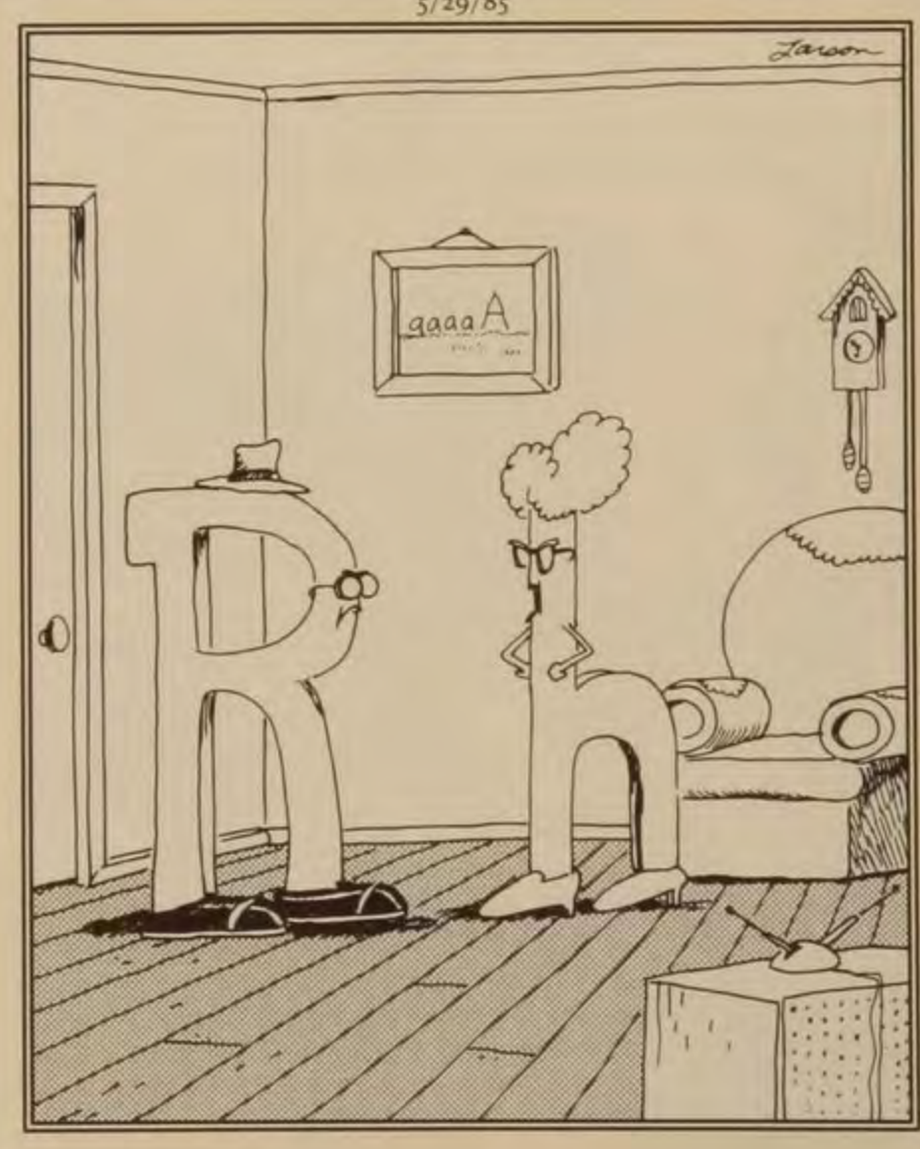
5/17/85

"Go ahead, Vera ... treat me like dirt."

5/28/85

"Well, every dog has his day."

5/29/85



"All right! All right! If you want the truth, off and on I've been seeing *all* the vowels—a, e, i, o, u. ... Oh, yes! And *some*times y!"

5/27/85

5/21/85

"You're on. Ten to one if I start howling I'll have everyone here howling inside five minutes."

5/24/85

"And I suppose *you* think this is a dream come true."

May 1985

5/31/85

"Just back off, buddy ... unless you want a fat lip."

5/30/85

"Shh. Listen! There's more: 'I've named the male with the big ears Bozo, and he is surely the nerd of the social group—a primate bimbo, if you will.'"

5/25/85

"Ha ha ha, Biff. Guess what? After we go to the drugstore and the post office, *I'm* going to the vet's to get tutored."

June 1985

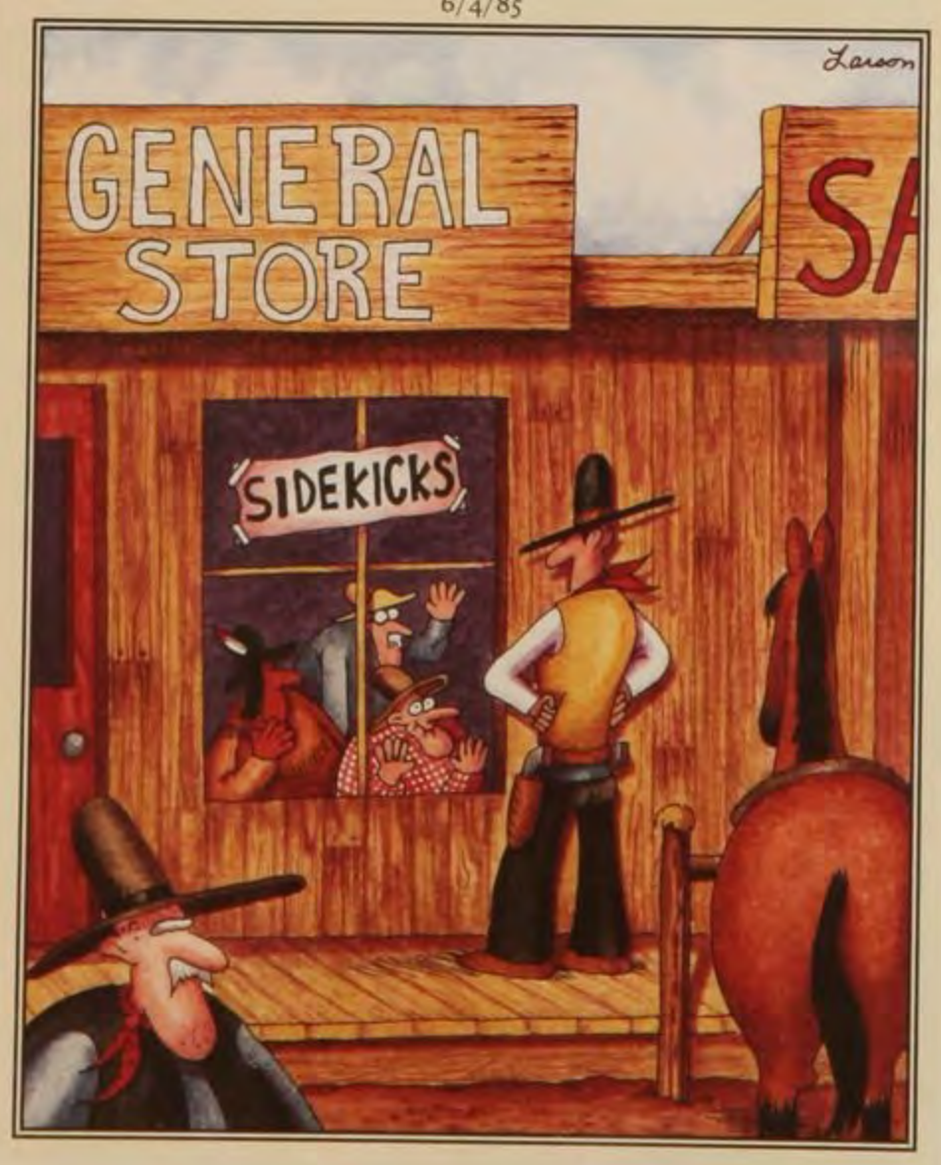
6/1/85

"Hank! You're reflecting!"

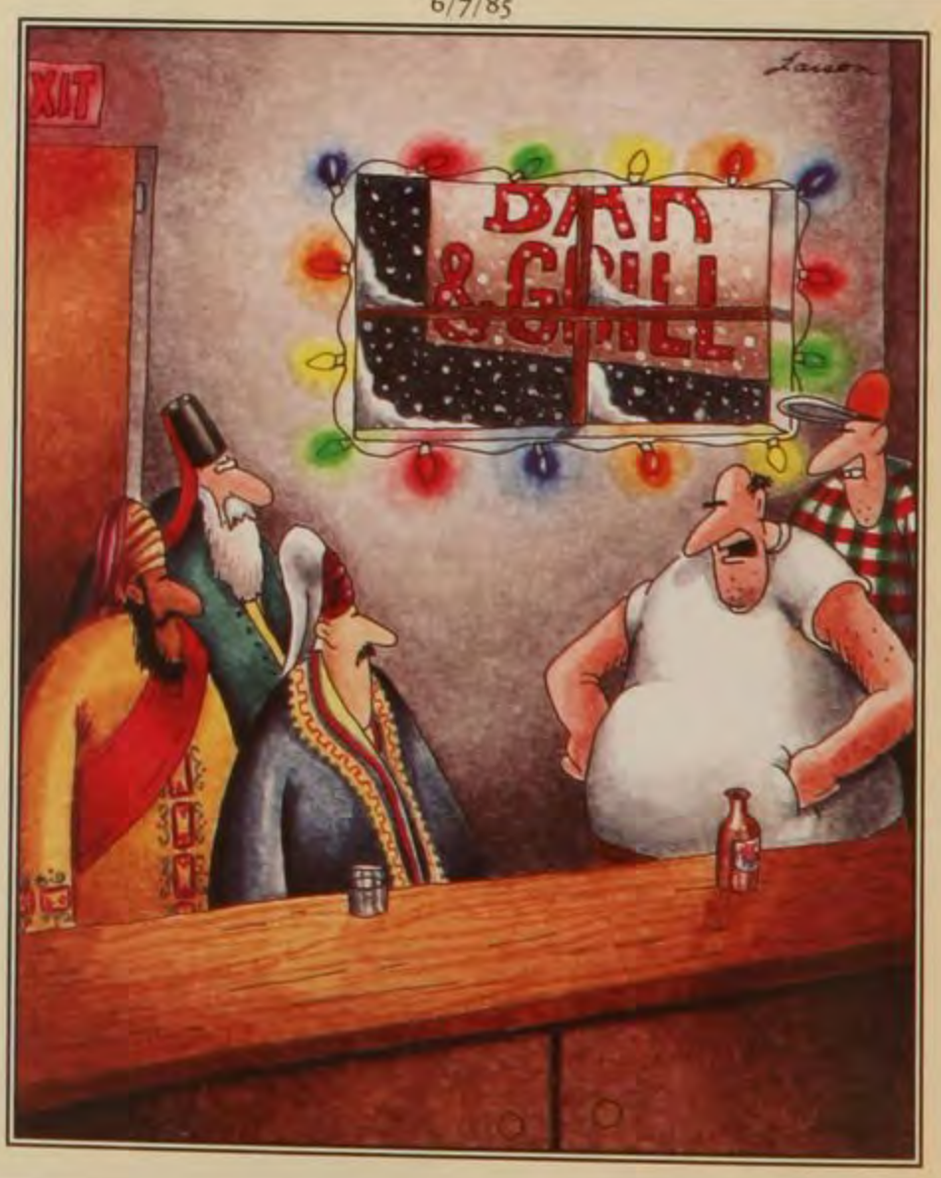
6/3/85

The third most common cause of forest fires.

6/4/85



6/7/85



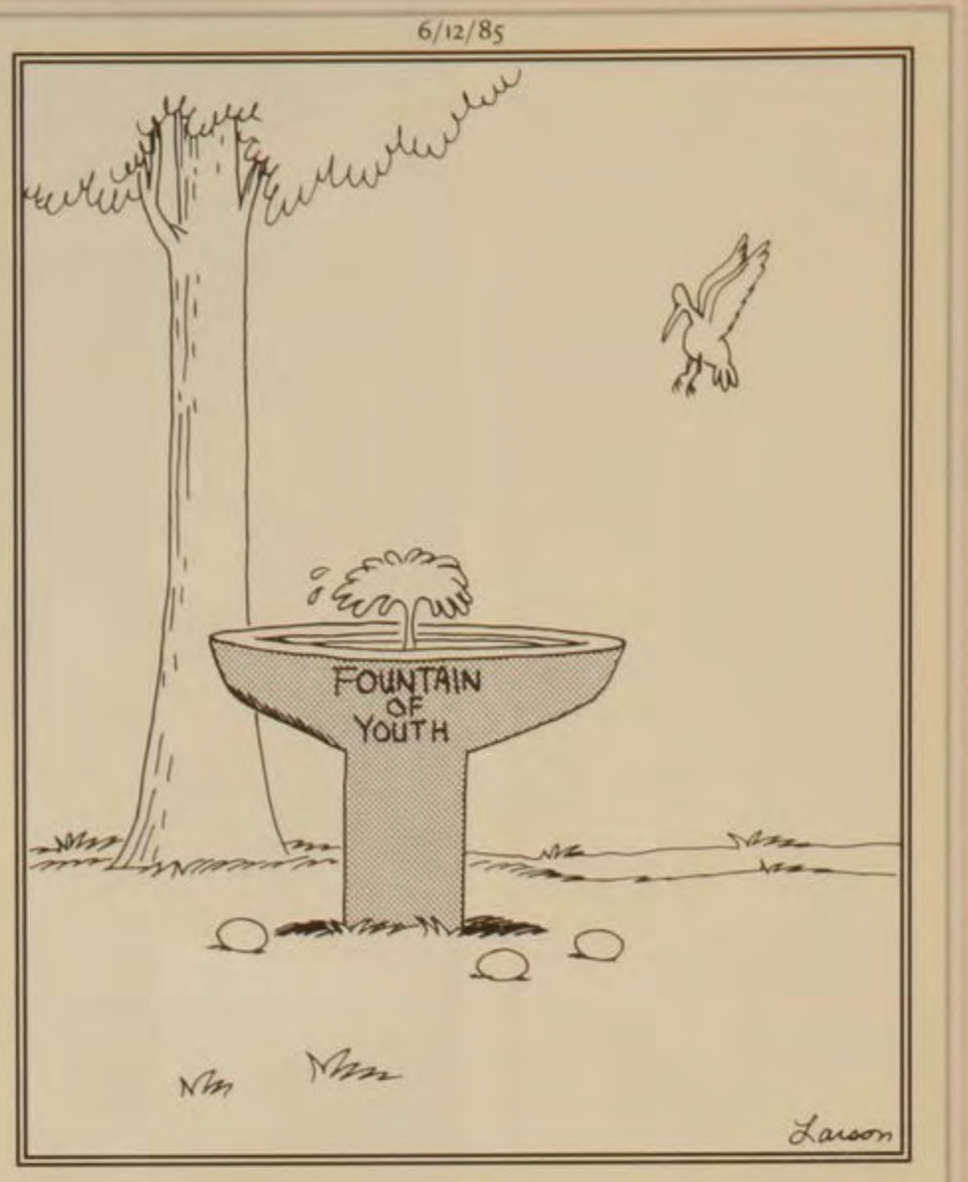
"Oh yeah? More like the three wise guys, I'd say."

June 1985

6/6/85

"You're a hard man, Bud."

6/12/85



When birds don't read

6/5/85

Suddenly the burglars found themselves looking down the barrel of Andy's Dobie-o-matic.

6/10/85

"Details are still sketchy, but we think the name of the bird sucked into the jet's engines was Harold Meeker."

June 1985

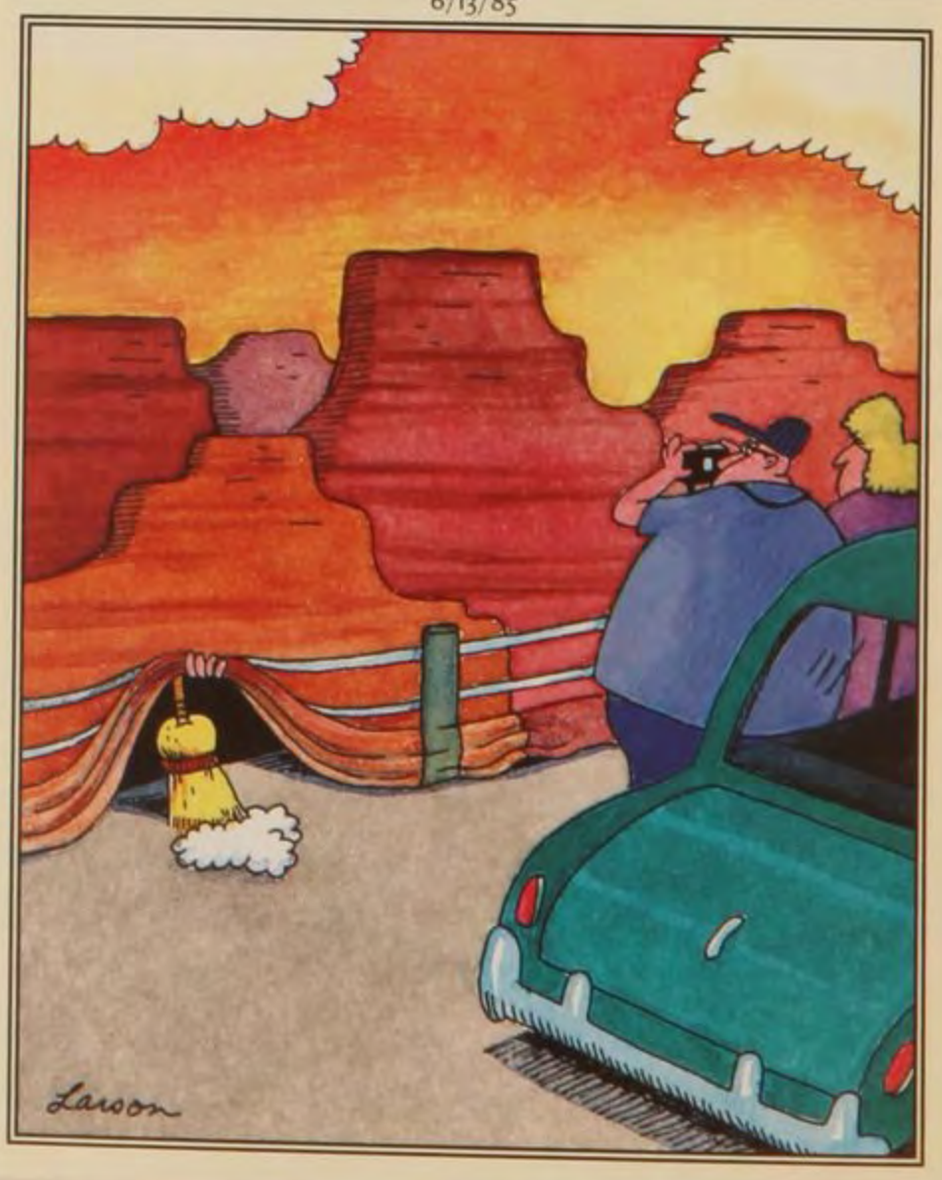
6/8/85

Ginger decides to take out Mrs. Talbot's flower bed once and for all.

6/11/85

"*There's* one of 'em! ... And I think there're at least three or four more runnin' around in here!"

6/13/85



June 1985

6/22/85

Mitch loses a dollar.

6/15/85

"Well, shoot. I just can't figure it out. ... I'm movin' over 500 doughnuts a day, but I'm still just barely squeakin' by."

6/25/85

When vultures dream

June 1985

"Oh, look, Roger! Nerds! ...
And some little nerdlings!"

Fly whimsy

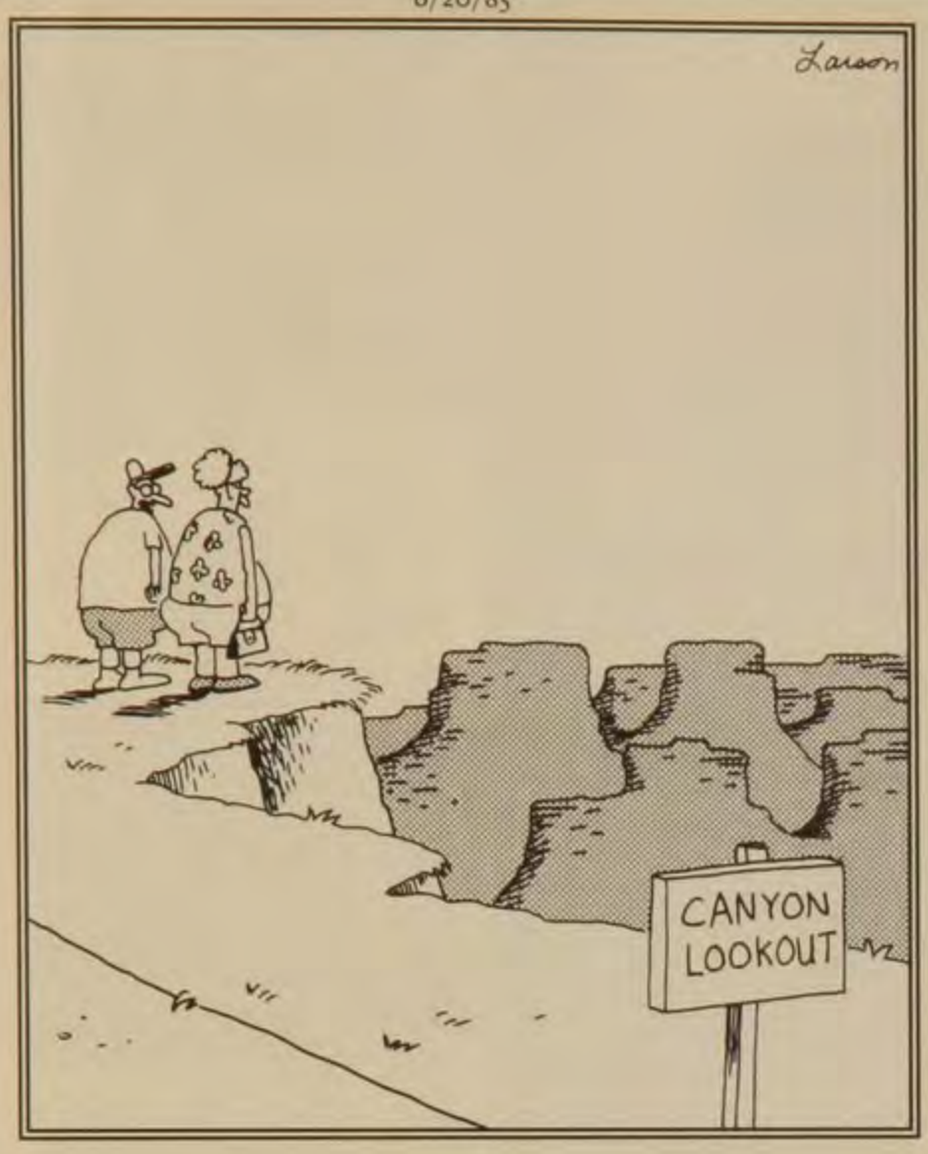
In his heart, Willy knew the ants were being very foolish.

Eventually, Murray took the job—but his friends never did speak to him again.

June 1985

6/20/85

Larson



"I dunno. We're just so far up, I think this would be better on the tube."

6/21/85

Larson

6/24/85

"He's using blanks—pass it on."

6/28/85

Larson

Randy and Mark were beginning to sense the wolves were up to no good.

June 1985

6/26/85

"Oh, that's so disgusting—I guess a fly strip and you in the same house just aren't going to work out."

6/27/85

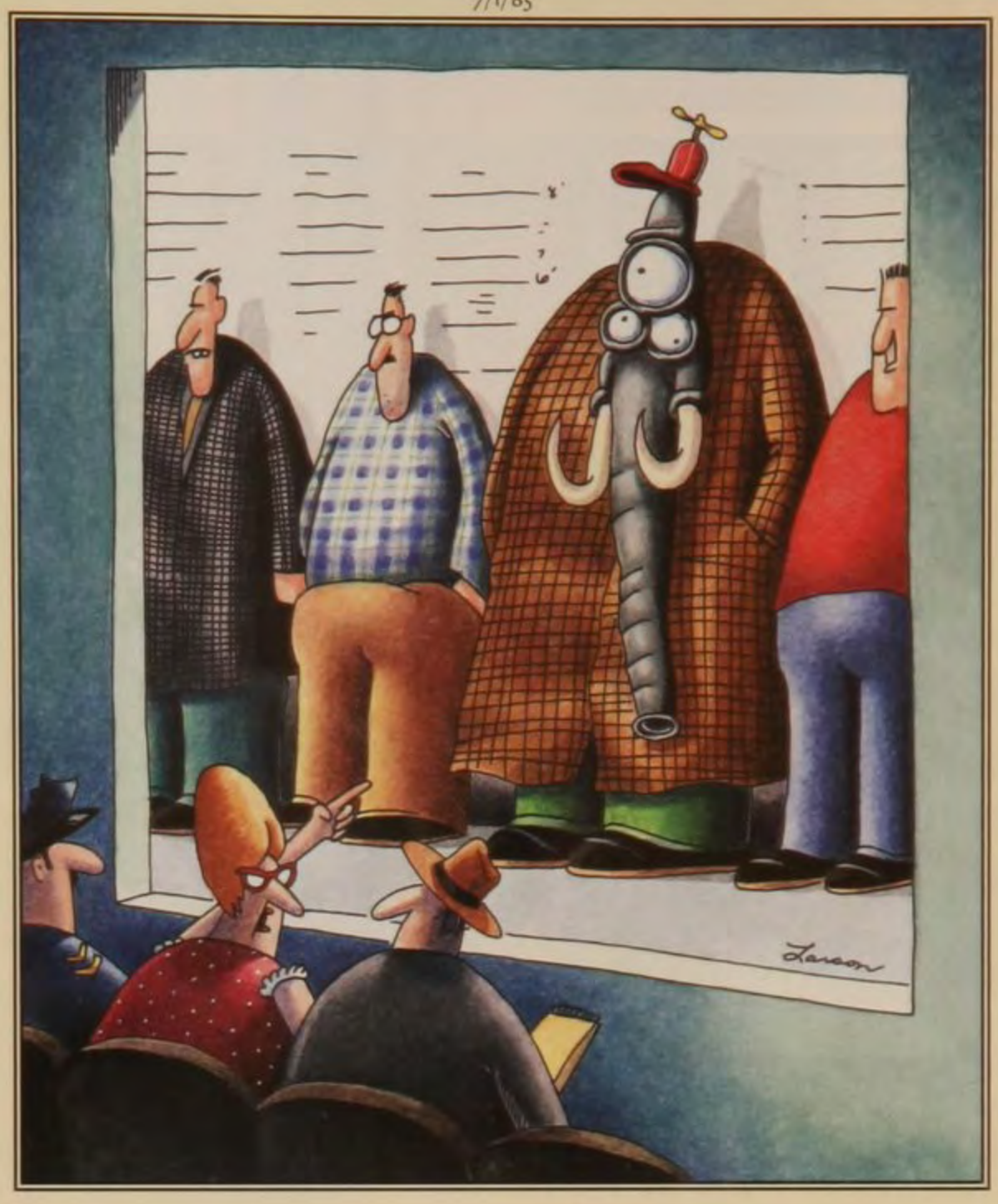
"C'mon, Gordy. ... Are you *really* choking, or just turning green?"

6/29/85

"Rise and shine, everyone! ... It's a beautiful day and we're all going to the windowsill."

July 1985

7/1/85



"*That's* him! *That's* the one! ... I'd recognize that silly little hat anywhere!"

7/2/85

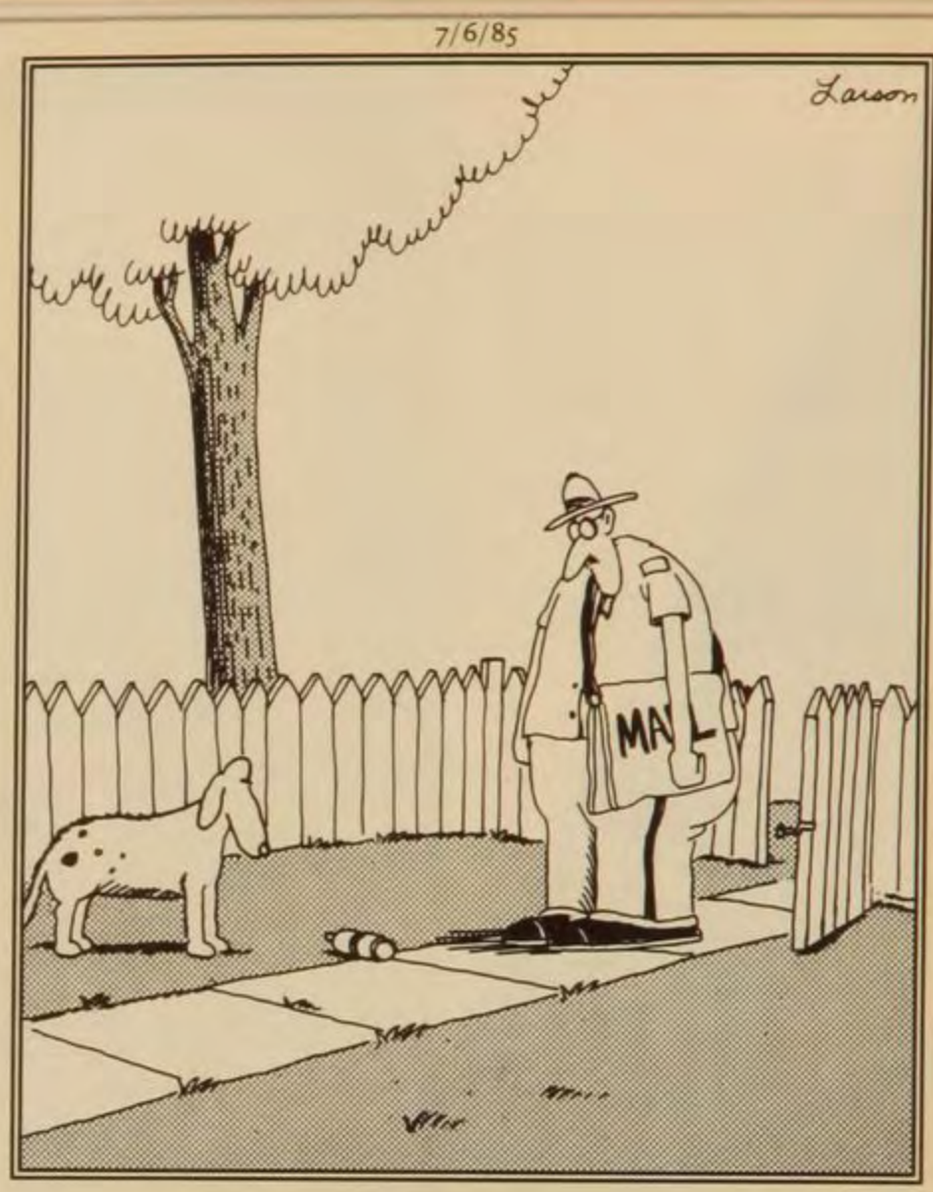
"Uh-oh, Norm. Across the street—whale watchers."

7/4/85

Occasionally—and especially thrilling for the visitors from the Midwest—a sub would come close enough to have its nose scratched.

July 1985

"Ooooo! Ooooo! ... Are you a good witch or a bad witch?"



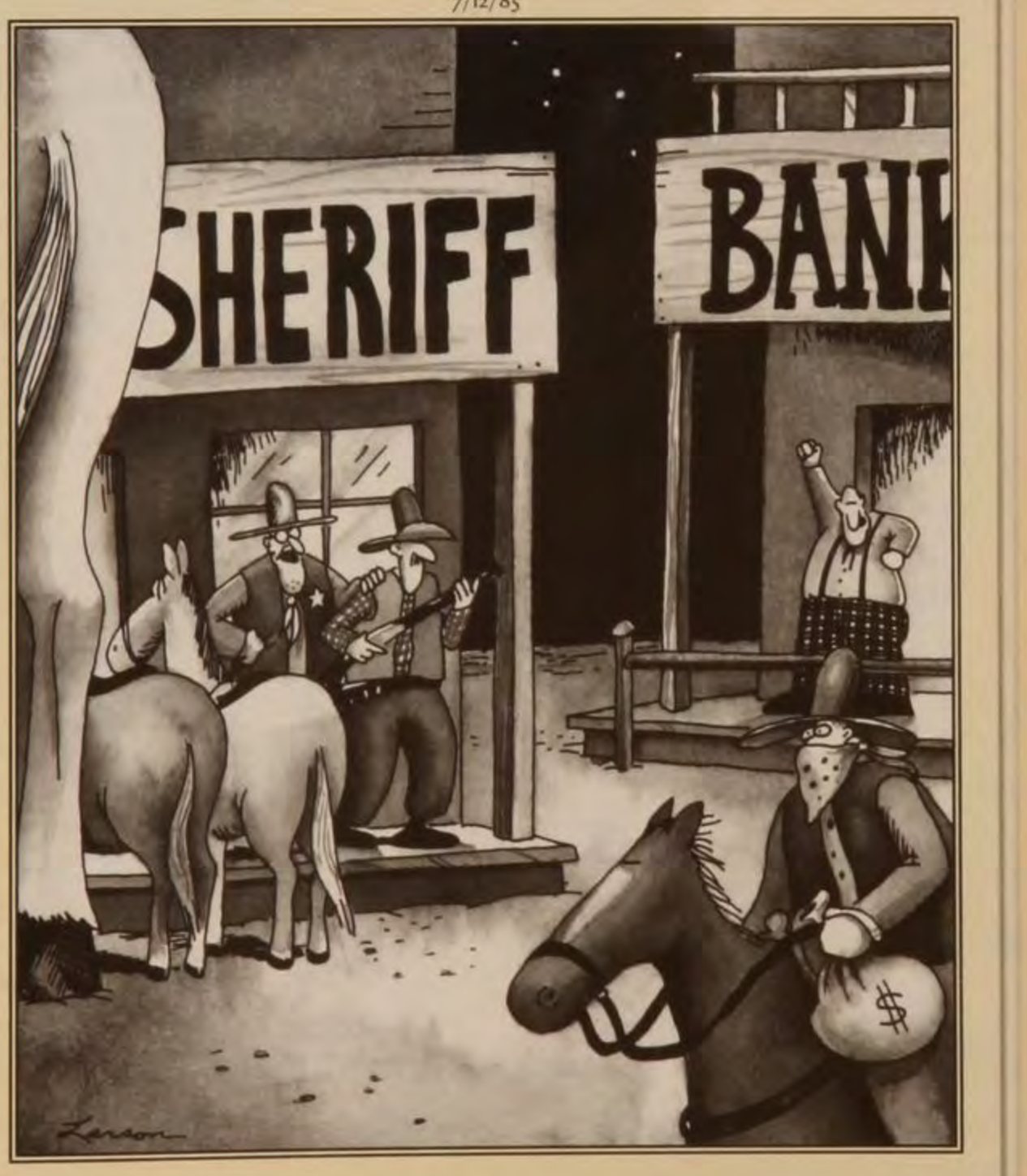
The can of Mace lay where it had fallen from Bill's hand, and, for a moment, time froze, as each pondered the significance of this new development.

Where the buffalo cruise

July 1985

Tarzan visits his childhood home.

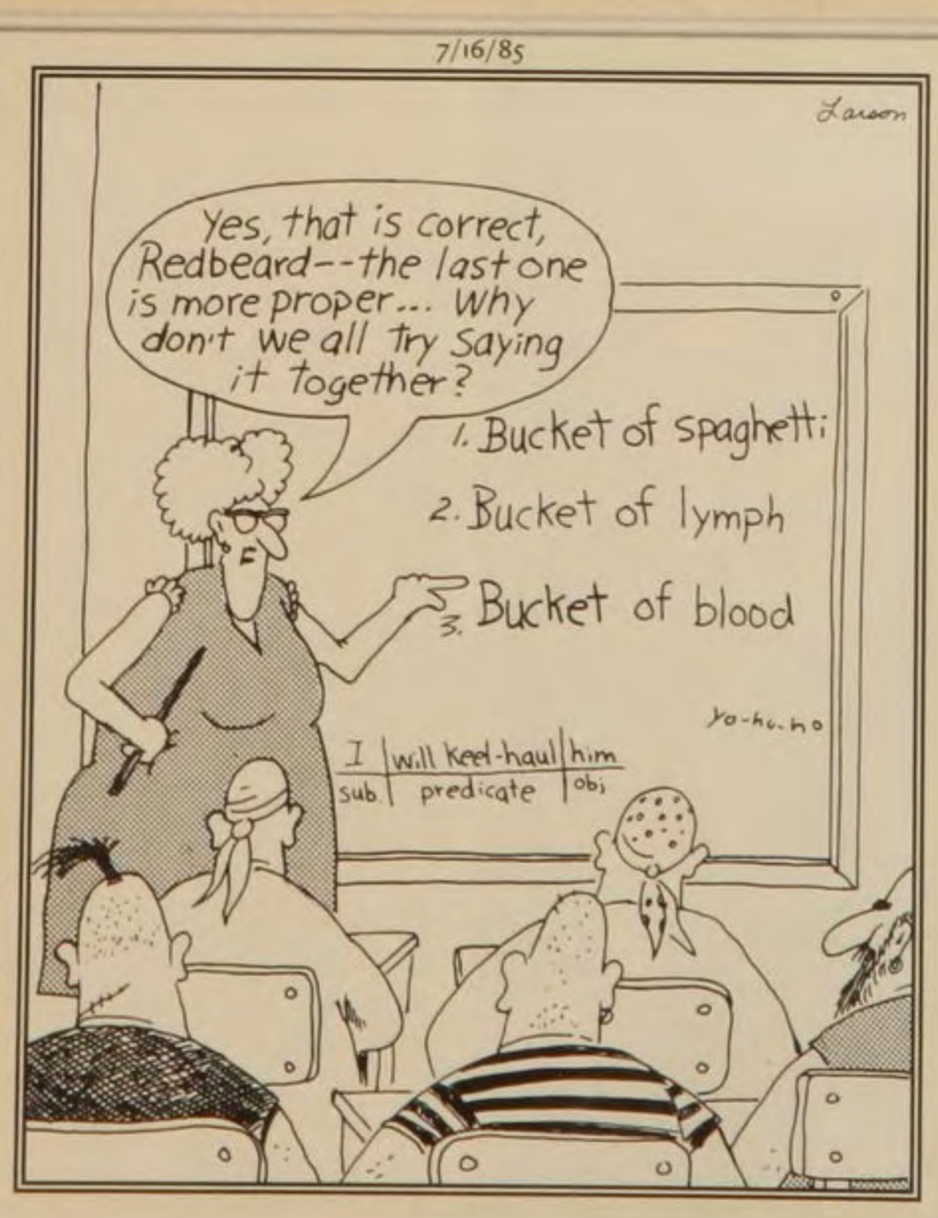
When a tree falls in the forest and no one is around.



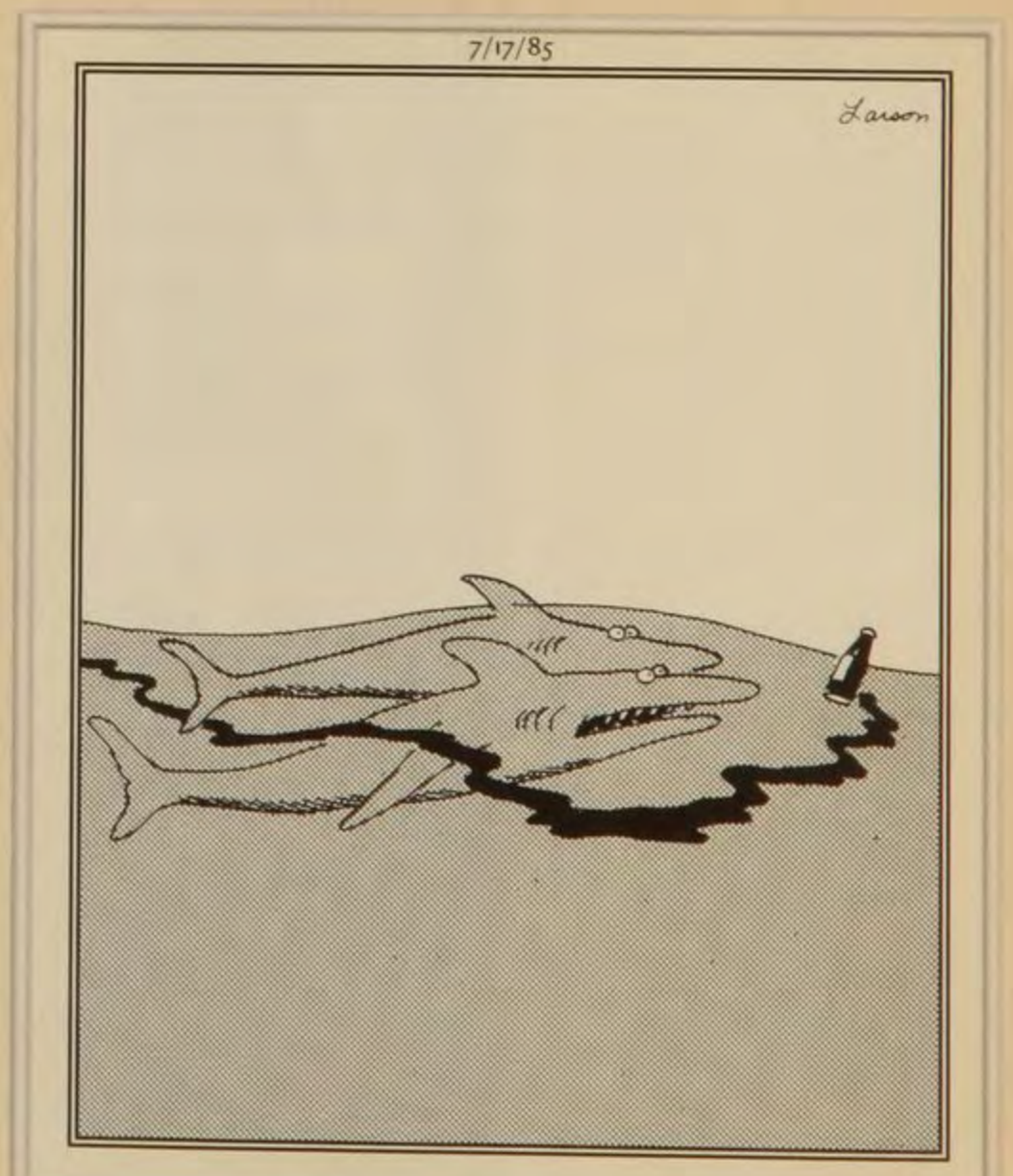
"Looks like the bank's been hit again. Well, no hurry—we'll take the big horse."

July 1985

"Are you serious? Look at our arms! If anything, I'm *twice* as tan as you are."



Pirate school



"What the—? Ketchup? We followed a *ketchup* trail for three miles?"

July 1985

7/10/85

Larson

"C'mon, c'mon—it's either one or the other."

7/13/85

Larson

7/23/85

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Stop the music! ... Something's wrong here!"

7/24/85

Larson

"Barrow"—precursor to the game of "wheelbarrow."

July 1985

7/18/85

"Hold up, Niles. It says here, 'These little fish have been known to skeletonize a cow in less than two minutes.'... Now *there's* a vivid thought!"

7/19/85

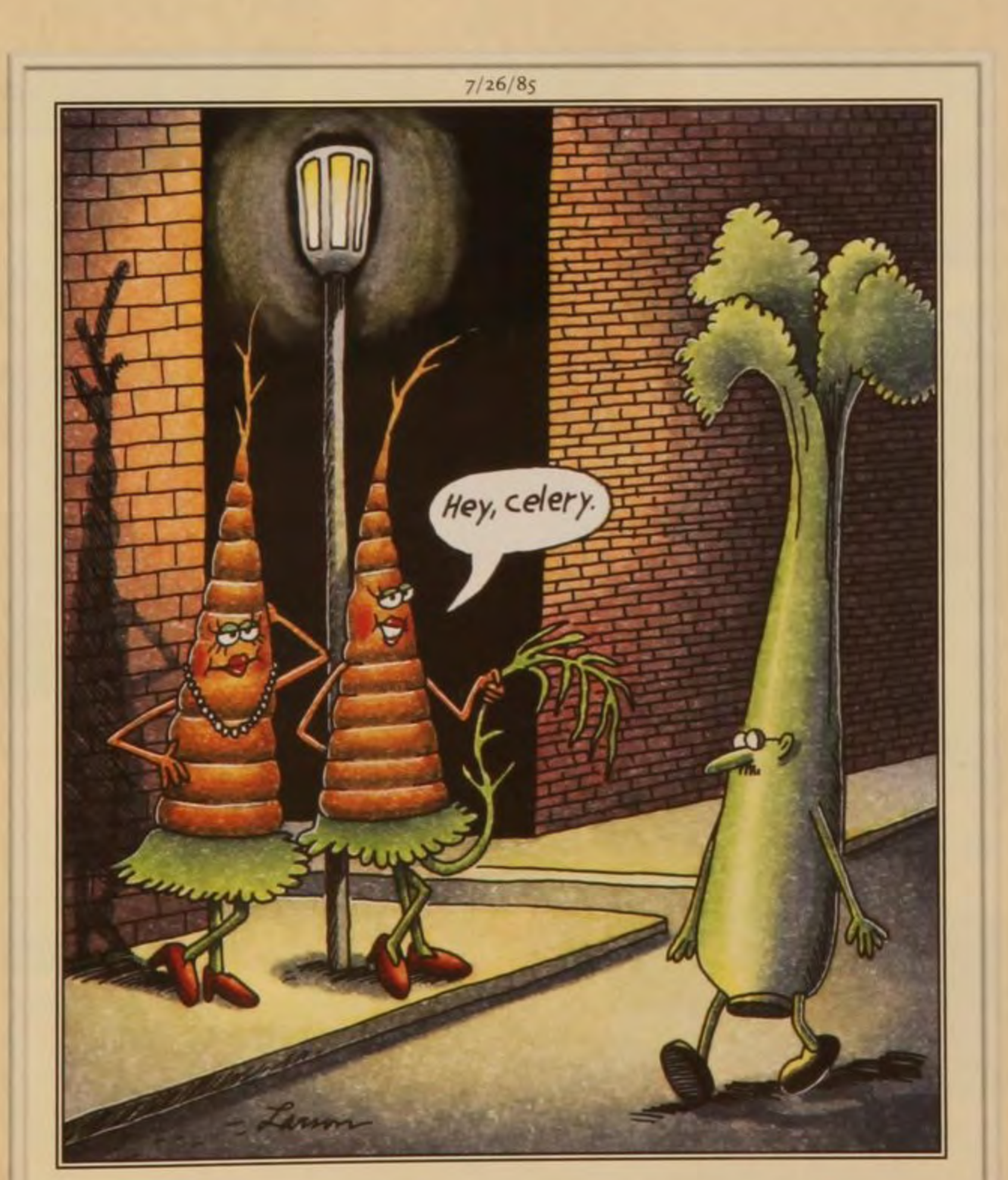
Between classes at the College of Laboratory Assistants

7/20/85

July 1985

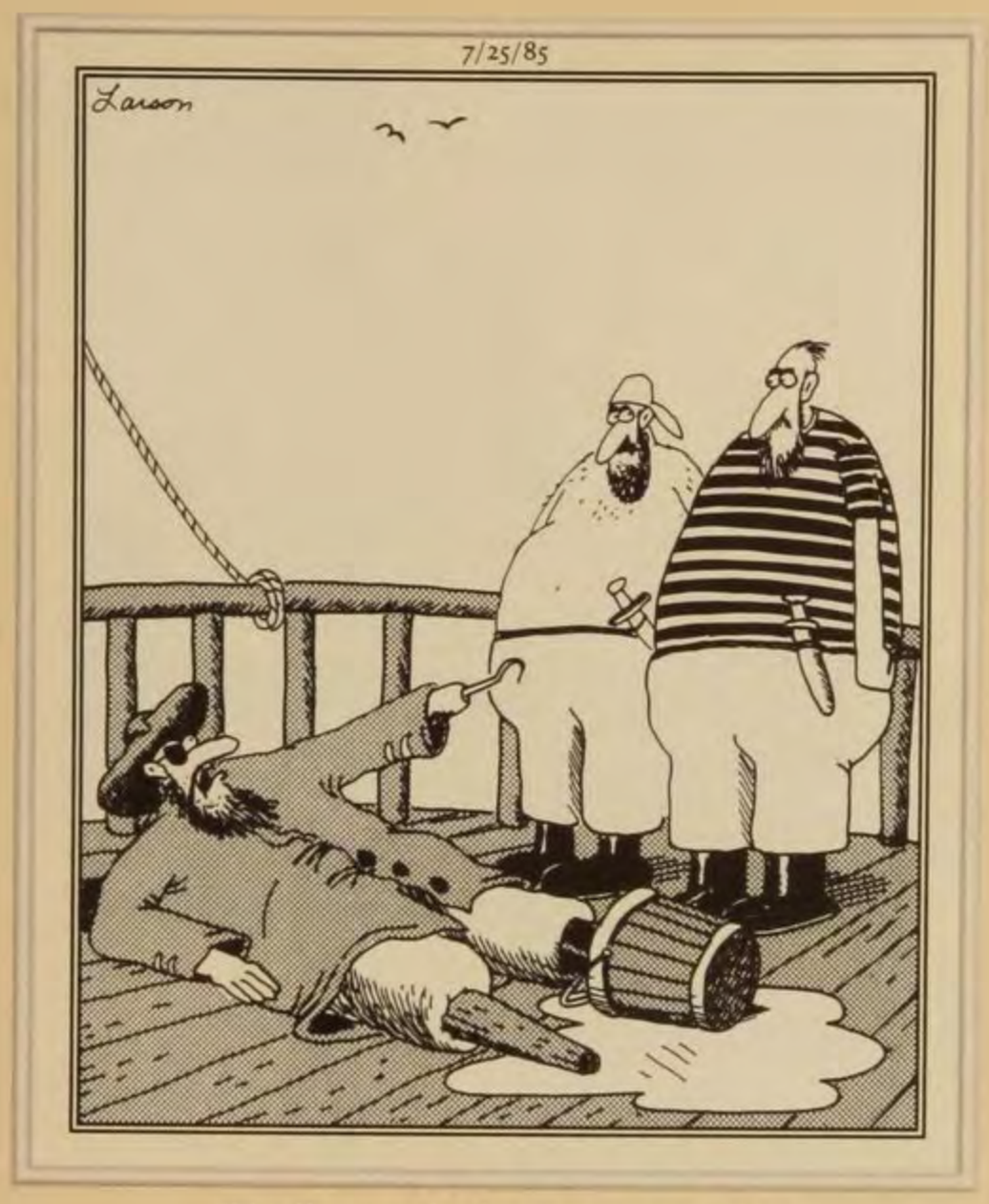
"Good heavens—just *look* at you! You've been down at the Fergusons' porch light, haven't you?"

"Mom! He's doing it again!"



Carrots of the evening

July 1985



"Well, *somebody* 'yo ho hoed!'"

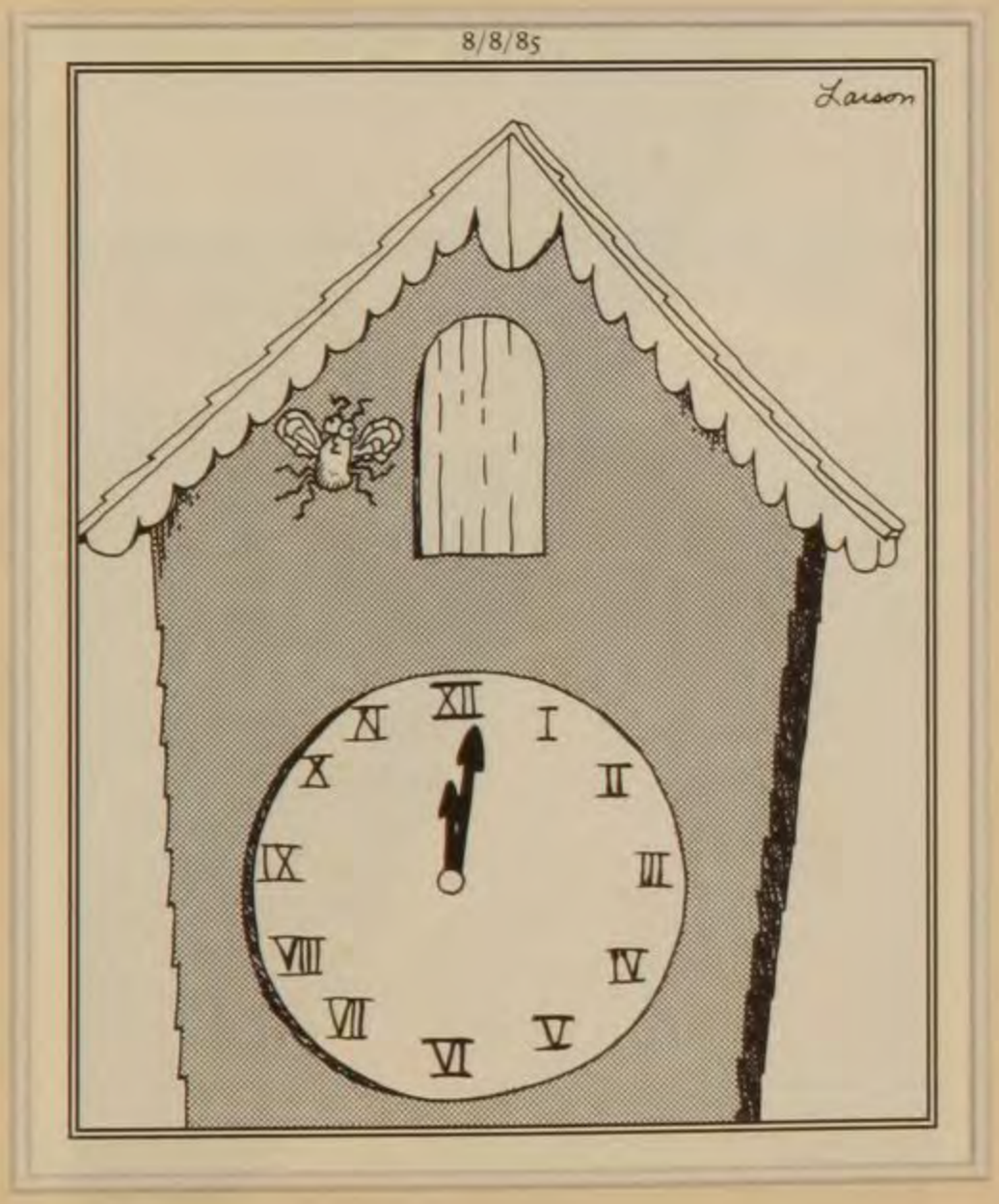
Channel 42—your vampire station.

Life on cloud eight

August 1985

"Staaaaaanleeeeeeeey!"

Medusa starts her day.



"Look out, Thak! It's a ... a ... Dang! Never can pronounce those things!"

August 1985

8/5/85

"To the death, Carlson! Hang on to the death!"

8/2/85

"Excuse me, sir, but Shinkowsky keeps stepping on the back of my sandal."

8/6/85

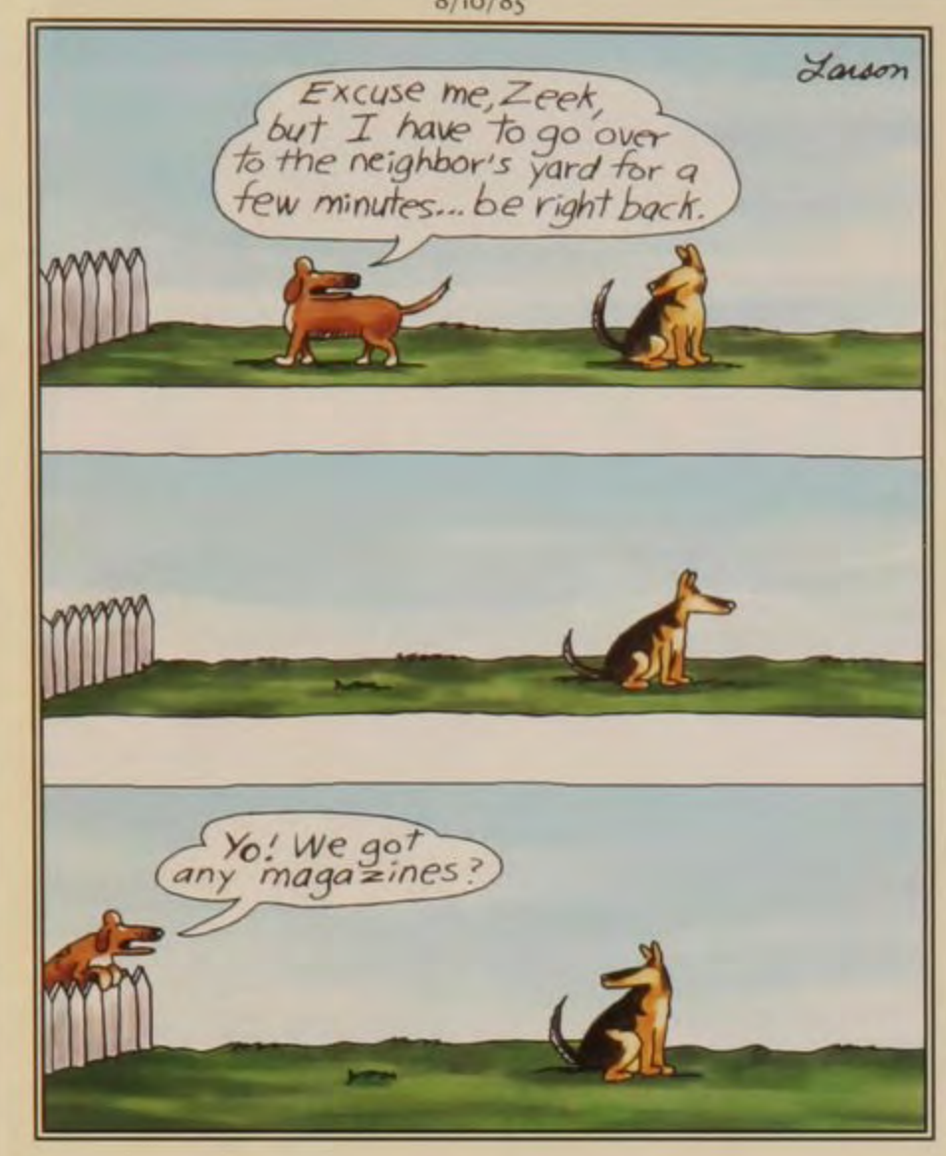
"Sorry to intrude, ma'am, but we thought we'd come in and just sort of roam around for a few minutes."

8/7/85

"Well, if you're almost ready, *I'm* dressed to kill."

August 1985

8/10/85



8/12/85

Down at the Eat and Slither

8/13/85

"Well, I guess I'll have the ham and eggs."

8/14/85

"Hold still, Omar. ... Now look up. Yep. You've got something in your eye, all right. Could be sand."

August 1985

"Don't ask me how it happened, Stan—just get your abdomen over here and get me unstuck!"

Punk porcupines

August 1985

8/19/85

When flight mechanisms become flooded

8/15/85

Childhood innocence

8/24/85

"Hey! I'm coming, I'm coming—
just cross your legs and wait!'"

August 1985

8/21/85

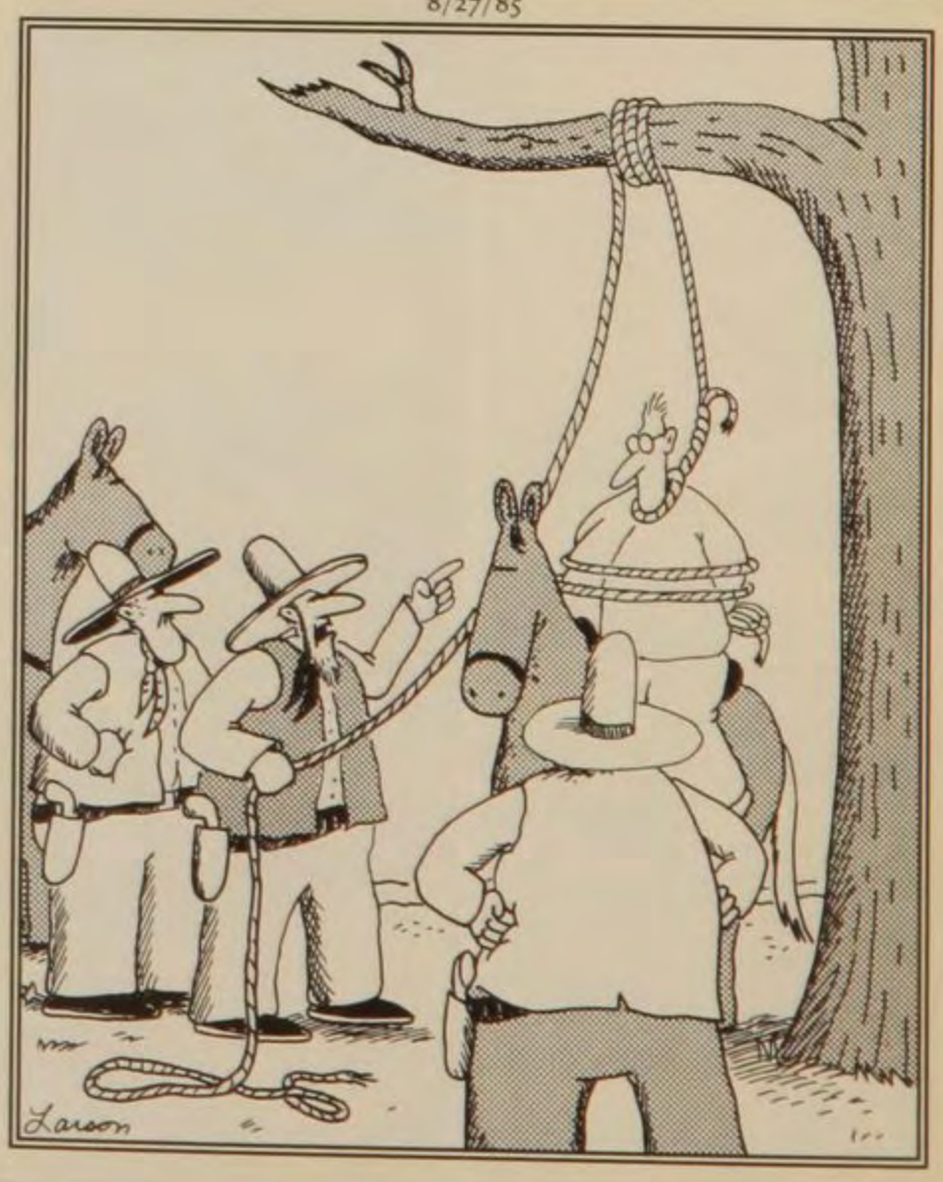
8/30/85

"Goldberg, you idiot! Don't play tricks on those things—they can't distinguish between 'laughing with' and 'laughing at'!"

8/23/85

The shark on the go

8/27/85



"One more time, stranger—if you're *really* an old cowhand from the Rio Grande, then how come your legs ain't bowed and your cheeks ain't tan?"

August 1985

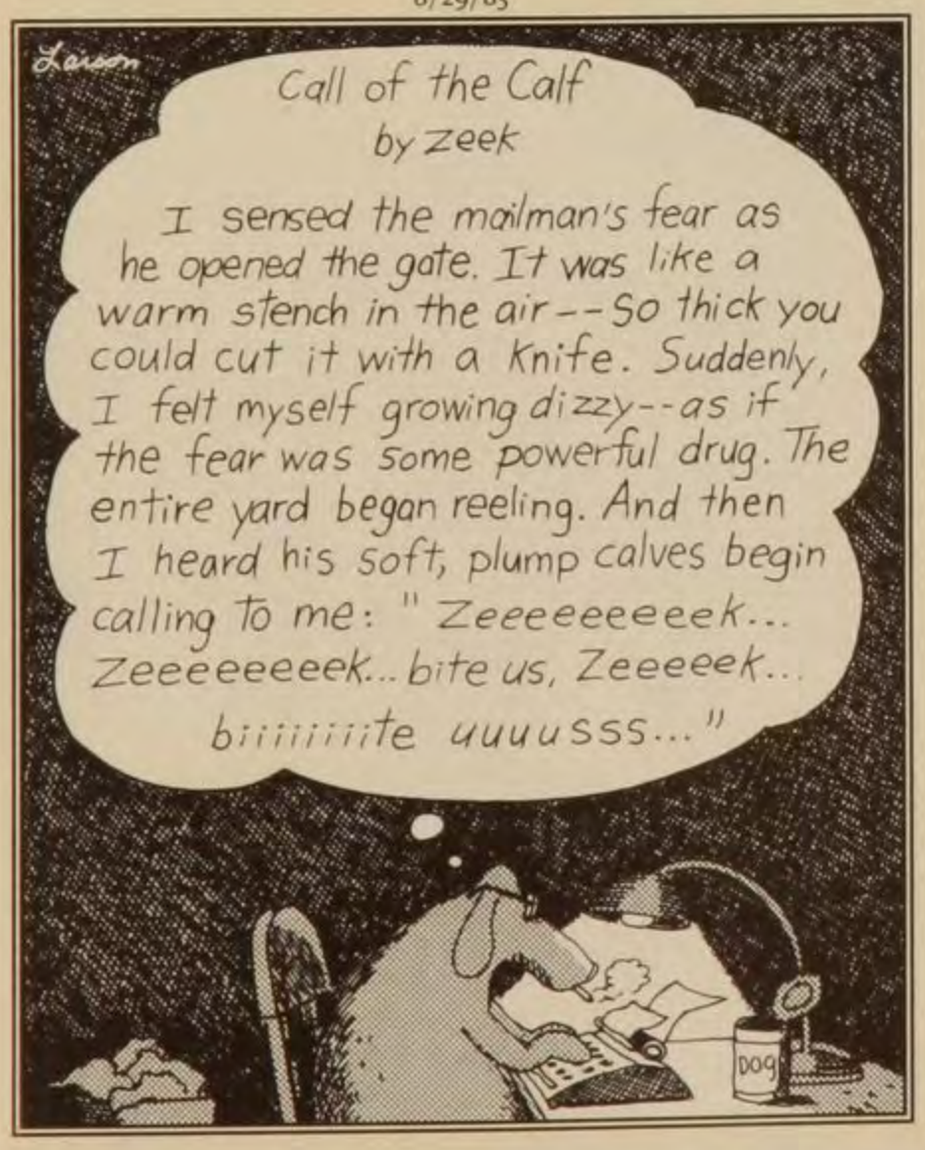
8/31/85

Billy leaves home to join the zoo, but returns the next day after being told that, as an animal, he was just "too common."

8/26/85

Dumb ox

8/29/85



Creative dog writing

8/28/85

"According to the map, this should be the place—but it sure don't look right to me. ... Well, we're supposed to die around here *some*where."

September 1985

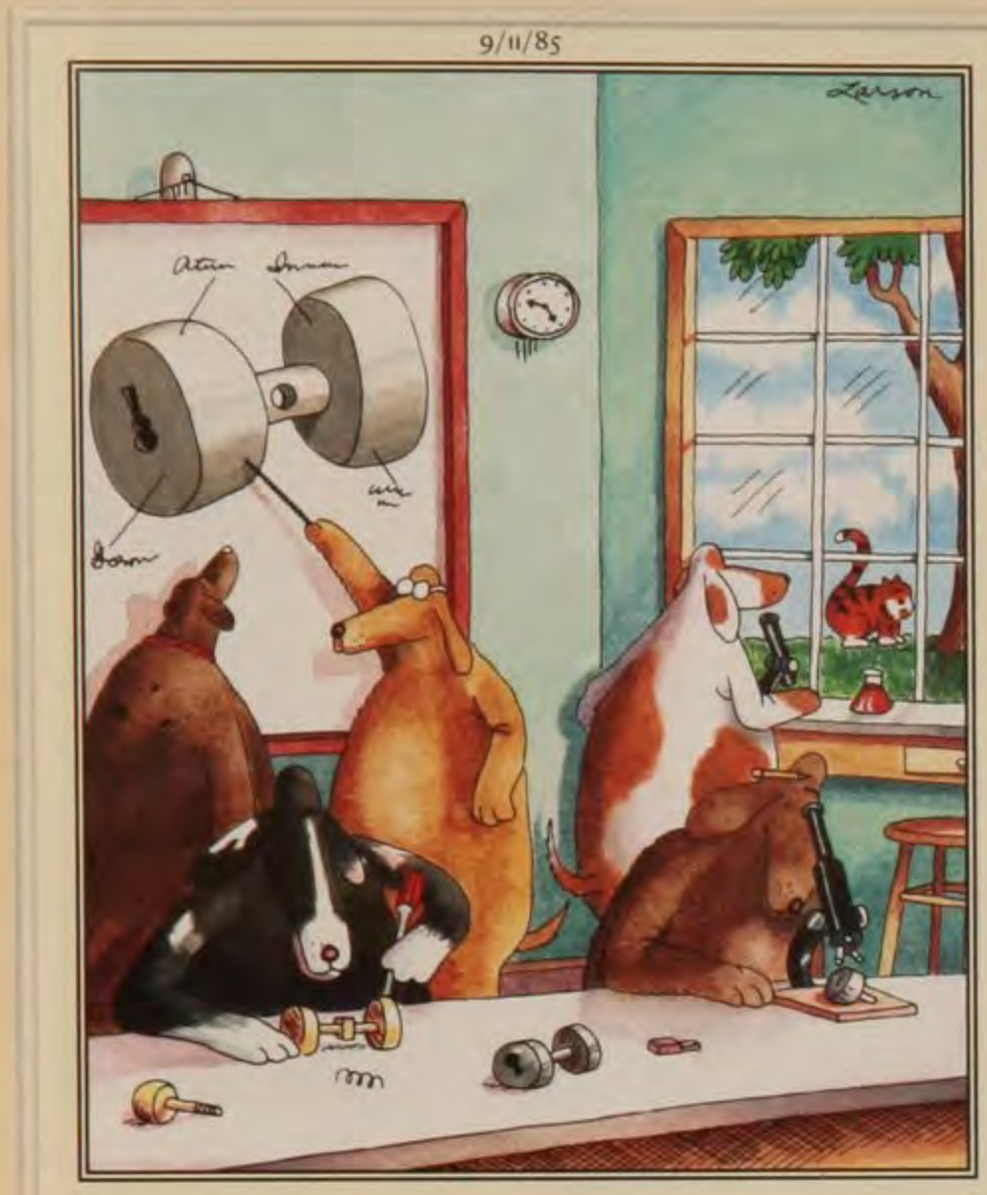
When fleas go unchecked

"Betty, you fool! Don't tease that thing!"

"Now, I want you all to know this cat's *not* from the market—Rusty caught it himself."

Tarzan contemplates another entry.

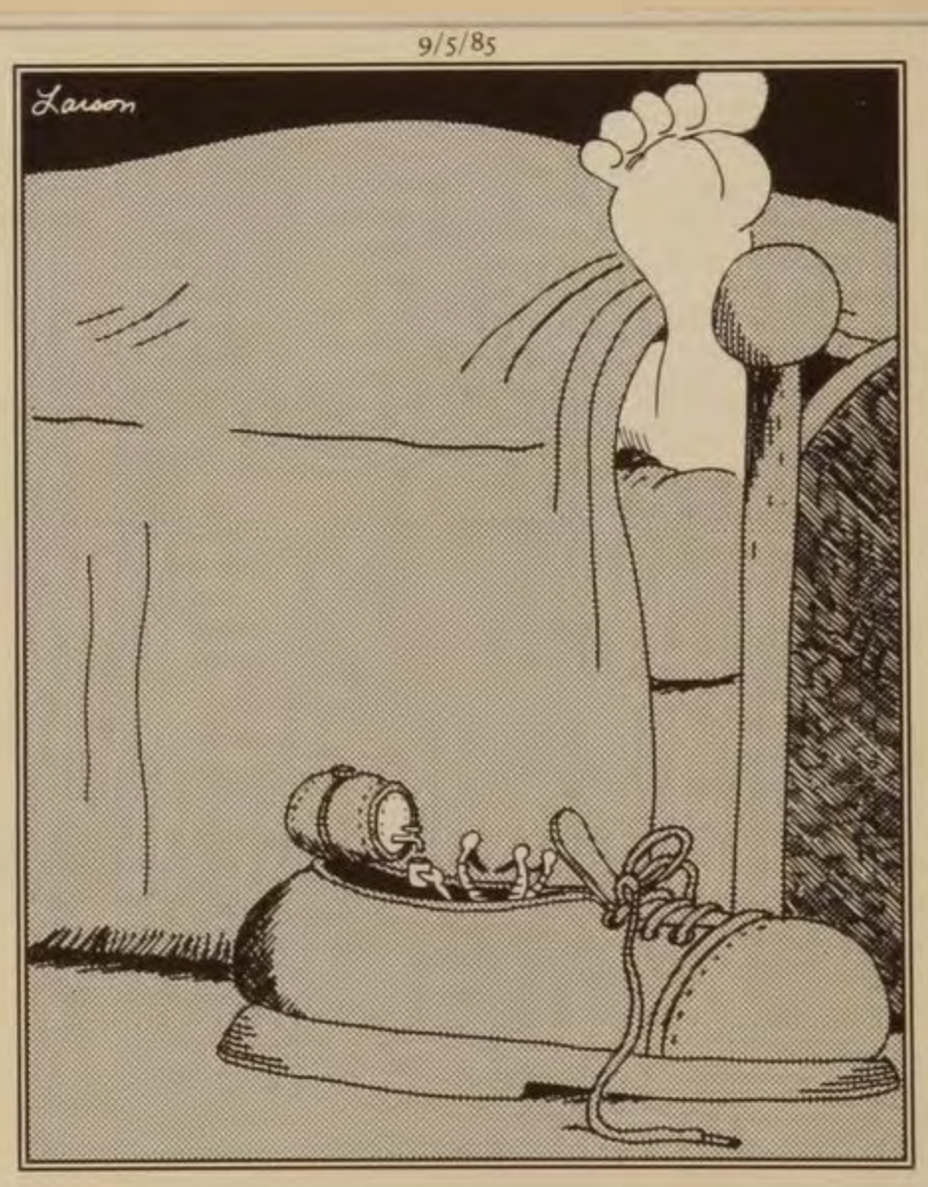
September 1985



Knowing how it could change the lives of canines everywhere, the dog scientists struggled diligently to understand the Doorknob Principle.

"This was *your* suggestion, Edna! ... 'Let's play Twister, everyone, let's play Twister!'"

"Is it still there?"



The kegger lasted well into the night, and on the following morning Dale thrust his foot into a nest of cranky, hung over, stimulus-response scorpions.

Through patience and training, Professor Carmichael believed he was one of the few scientists who could freely visit the dangerous Wakendas.

"Varmints! ... You're all just a bunch of cheatin' varmints!"

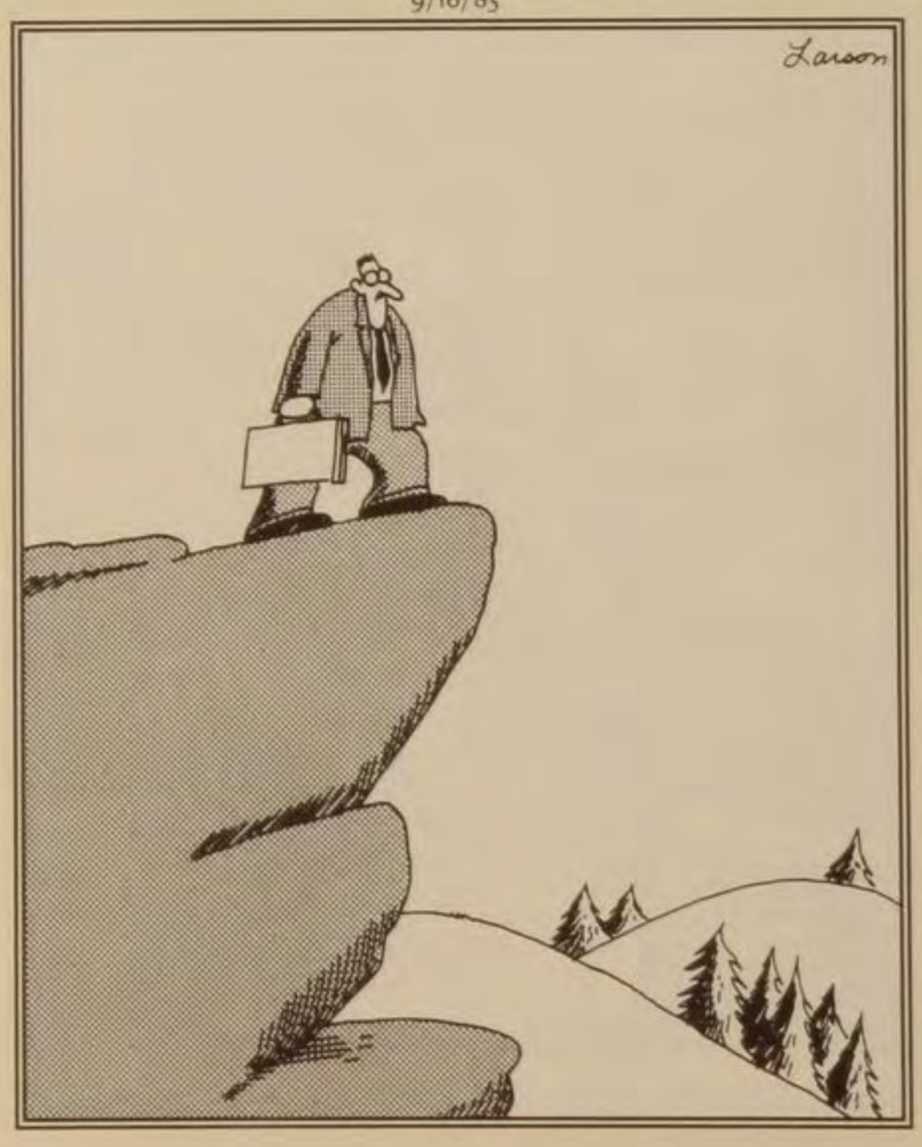
9/17/85

"Oh, what a cute little Siamese. ... Is he friendly?"

9/13/85

And then Jake saw something that grabbed his attention.

9/16/85



Seymour Frishberg: Accountant of the Wild Frontier

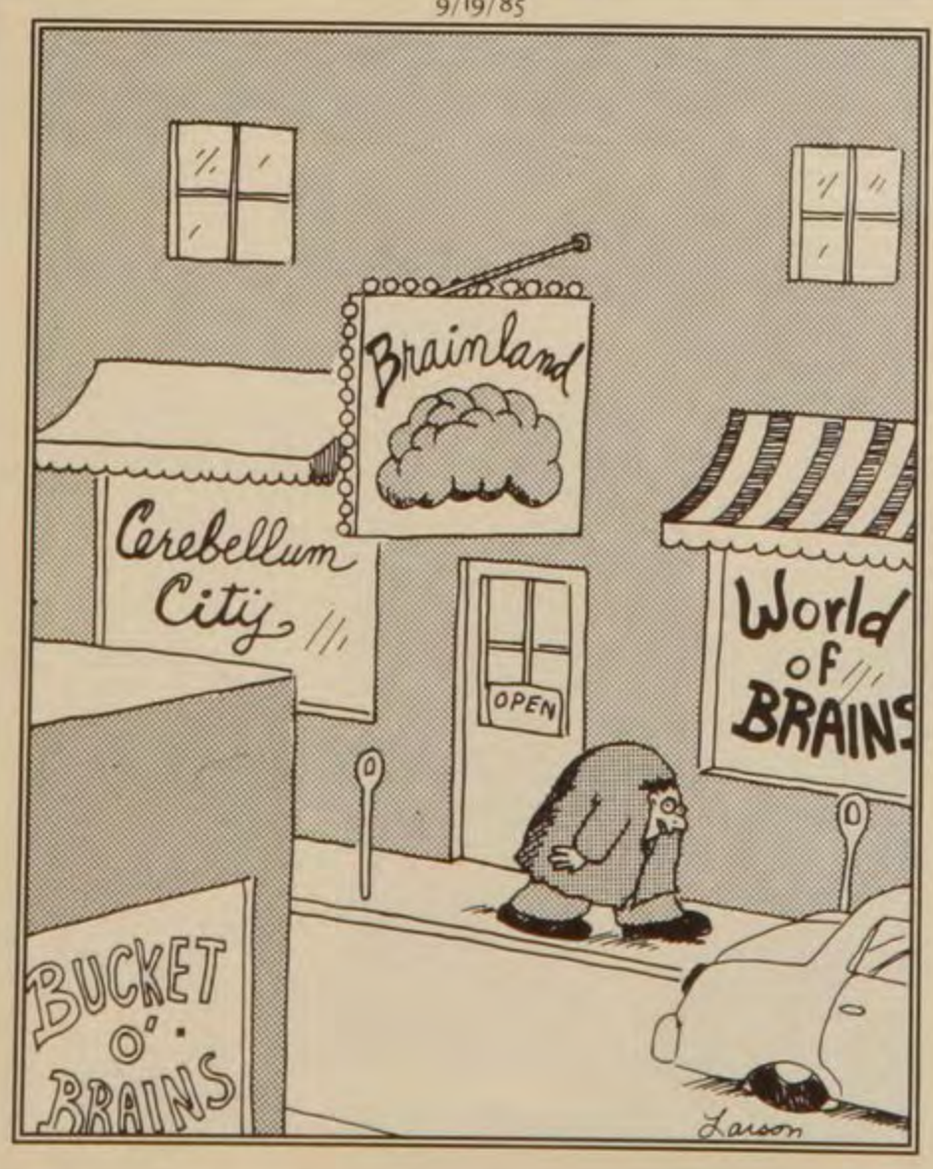
September 1985

9/18/85

9/20/85

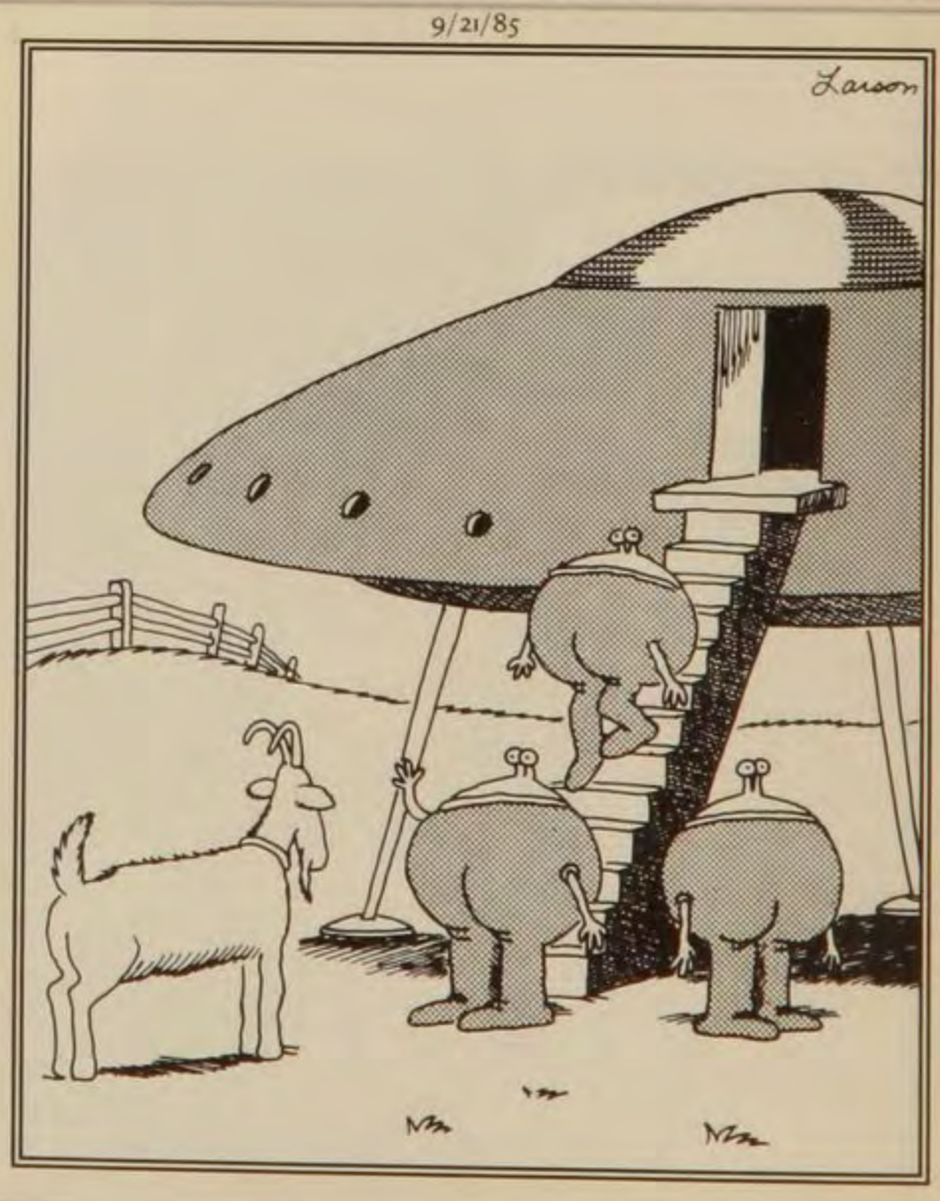
"Python ... and he's home."

9/19/85



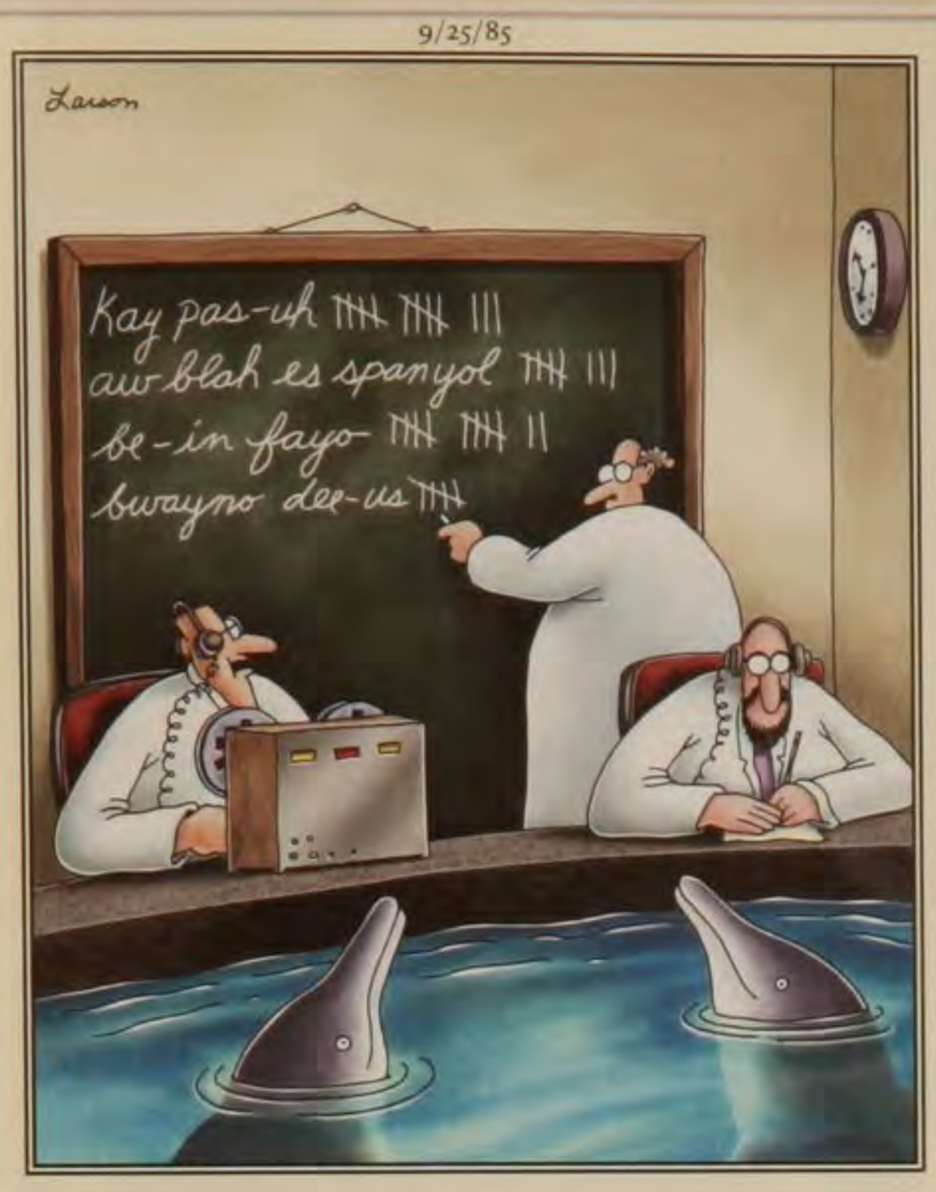
Igor goes shopping.

9/21/85



When worlds collide

September 1985



"Matthews ... we're getting another one of those strange 'aw blah es span yol' sounds."

"Notice all the computations, theoretical scribblings, and lab equipment, Norm. ... Yes, curiosity killed these cats."

While the city slept, Dogzilla moved quietly from building to building.

Feb. 27, 1907: The duck-billed platypus is invented.

September 1985

9/27/85

Late at night, his own stomach would foil Gordon's attempt at dieting.

9/28/85

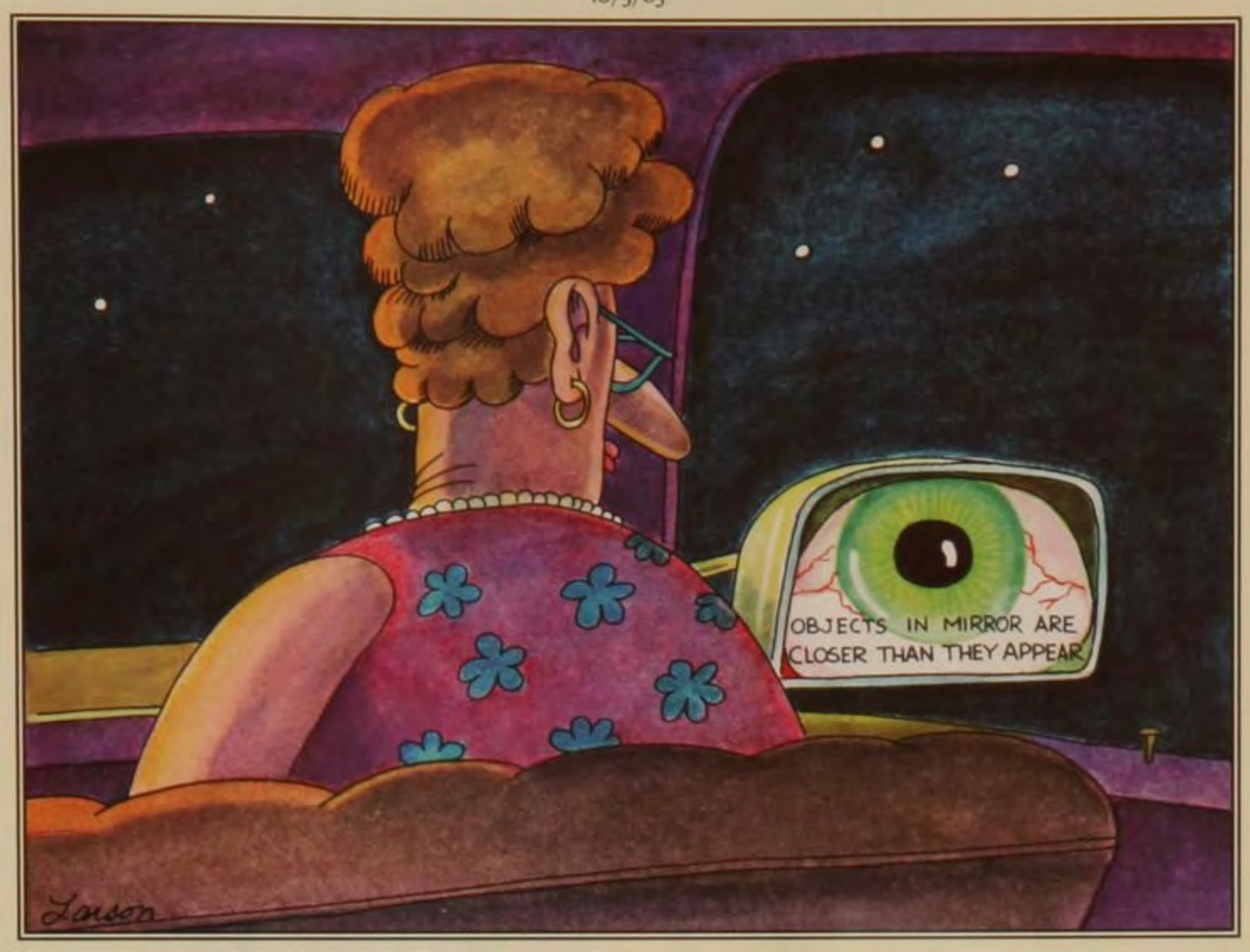
"A cat killer? Is that the face of a cat killer? Cat chaser maybe. But hey—who isn't?"

9/30/85

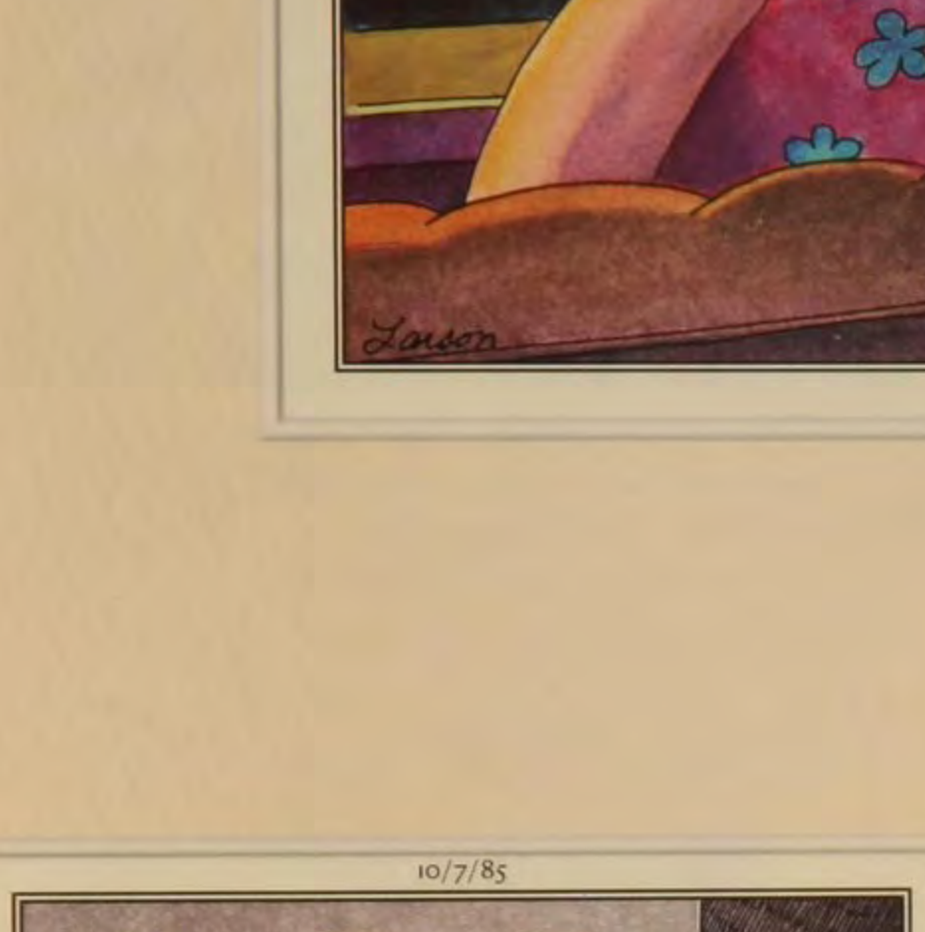
The Arnolds feign death until the Wagners, sensing the sudden awkwardness, are compelled to leave.

October 1985

10/3/85



10/7/85



"Sidney! I made a mistake! ... Deposit the $50 *check* into savings, and put the $500 in *cash* into checking!"

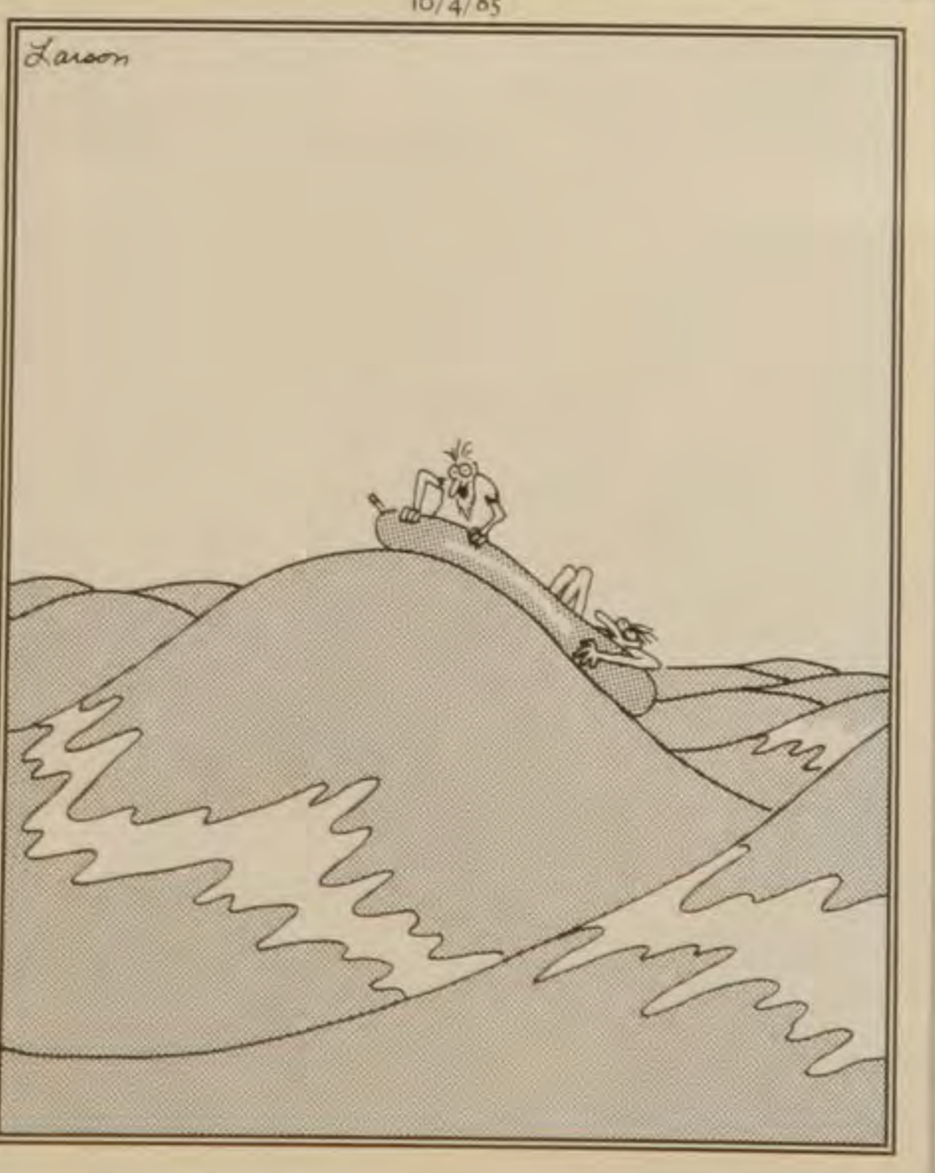
10/9/85

"Well, *I'm* addicted. ... Have you tried Carol's sheep dip?"

October 1985

The ghost of Baron Rudolph von Guggenheim, 16th-century nobleman murdered by the Countess Rowena DuBois and her lover (believed to be the Duke of Norwood), falls into Edna's bean dip.

"And *now* here comes Zubulu. If this isn't weird—middle of the night, and for some reason we're all restless."



"Here comes another big one, Roy, and here—we—gooooooowheeeeeeeooo!"

After reaching the far side, Tonga cut the bridge—sending the outraged suburbanites into the river below. Their idol was now his ... as well as its curse.

October 1985

"Quick, Abdul! Desert—one 's' or two?"

The bride, best man, and ushers
of Frankenstein

"Whoopsies! ... If this tomb *does* have a
curse on it, Webster, I daresay we'll be
the first to find out."

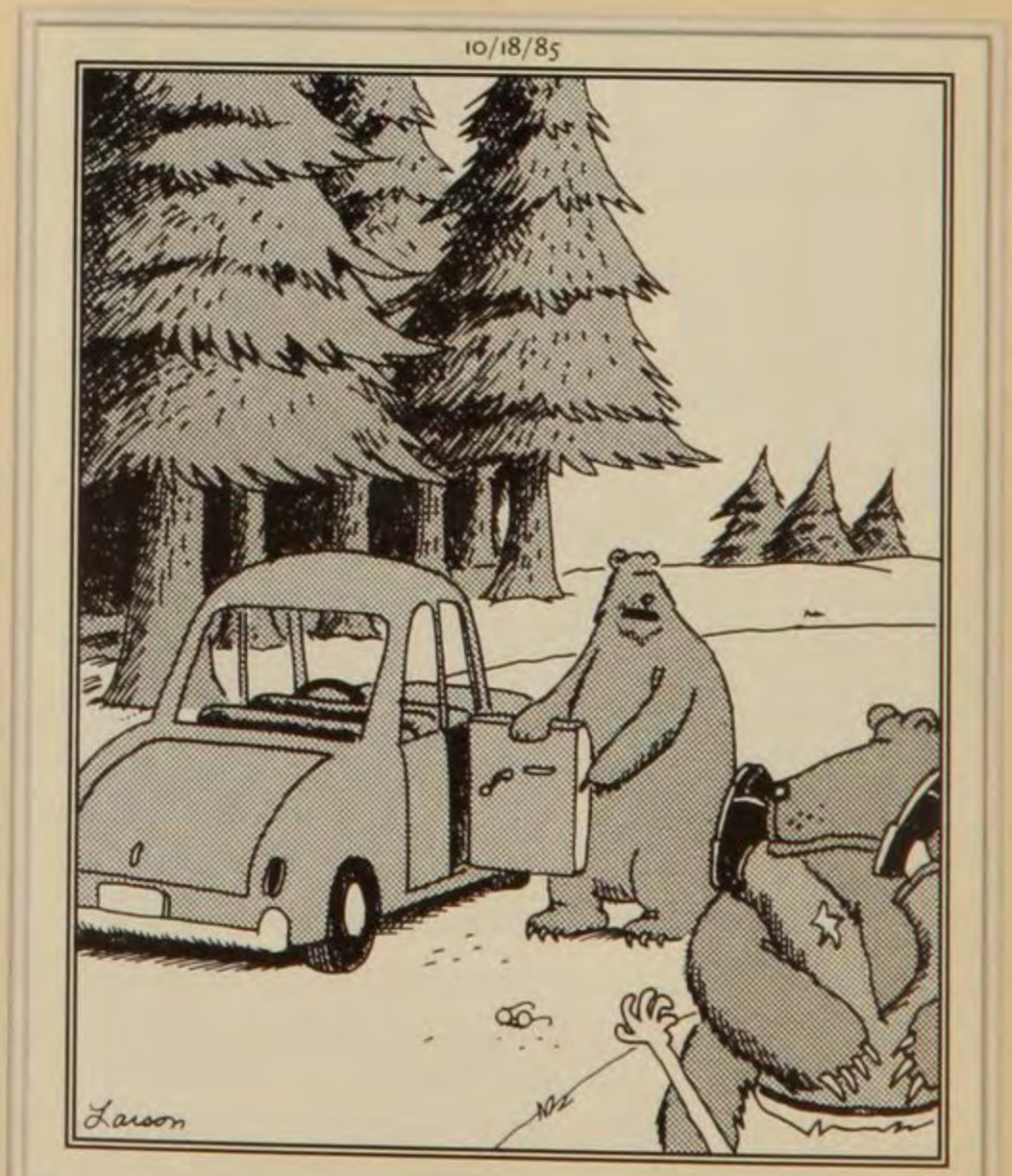
Hannibal's first attempt

October 1985

"Be back by suppertime, Hump. ... And as always, you be careful!"

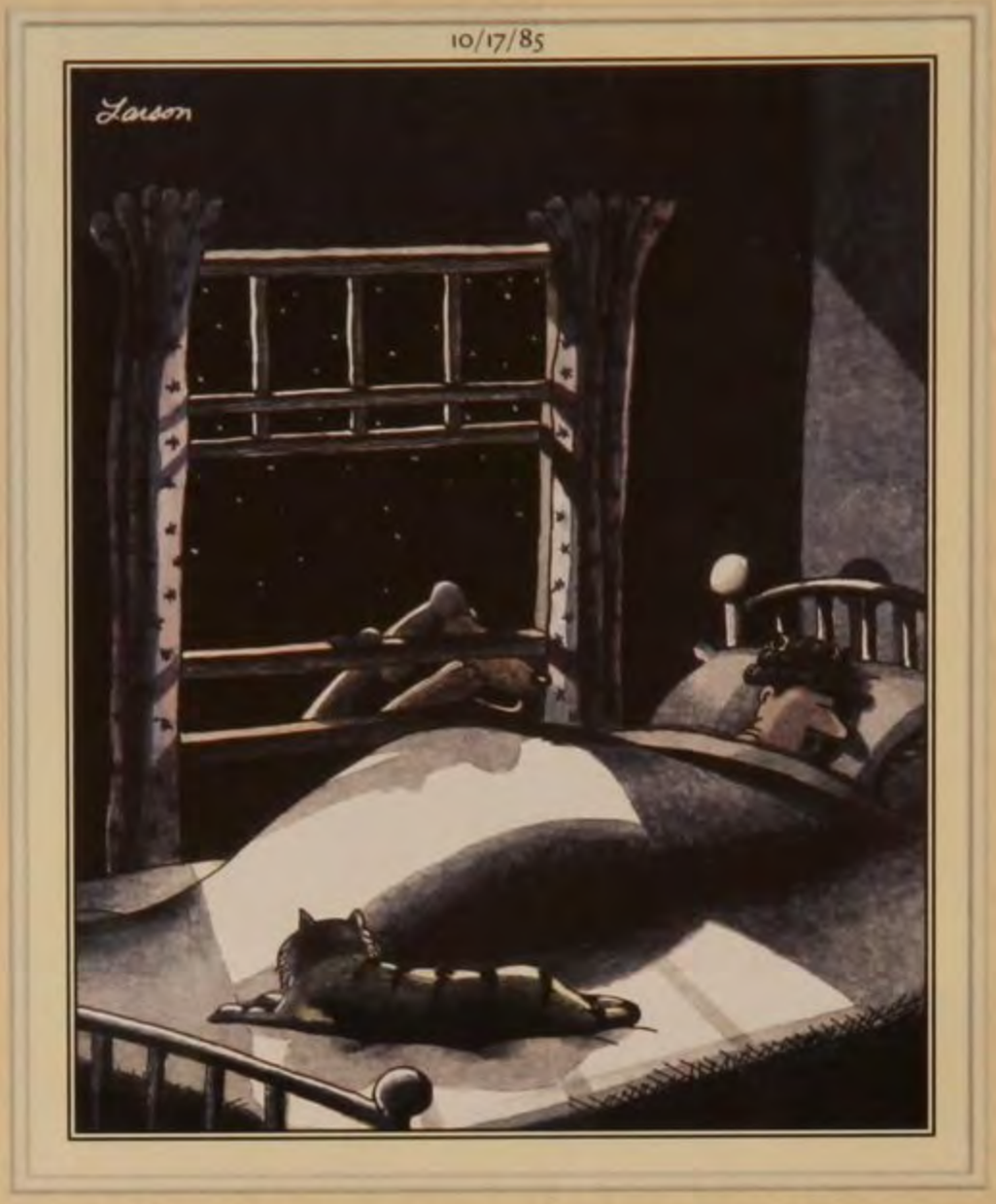
"I just can't tell from here. ... That could either be our flock, another flock, or just a bunch of little m's."

Luposlipaphobia: The fear of being pursued by timber wolves around a kitchen table while wearing socks on a newly waxed floor.

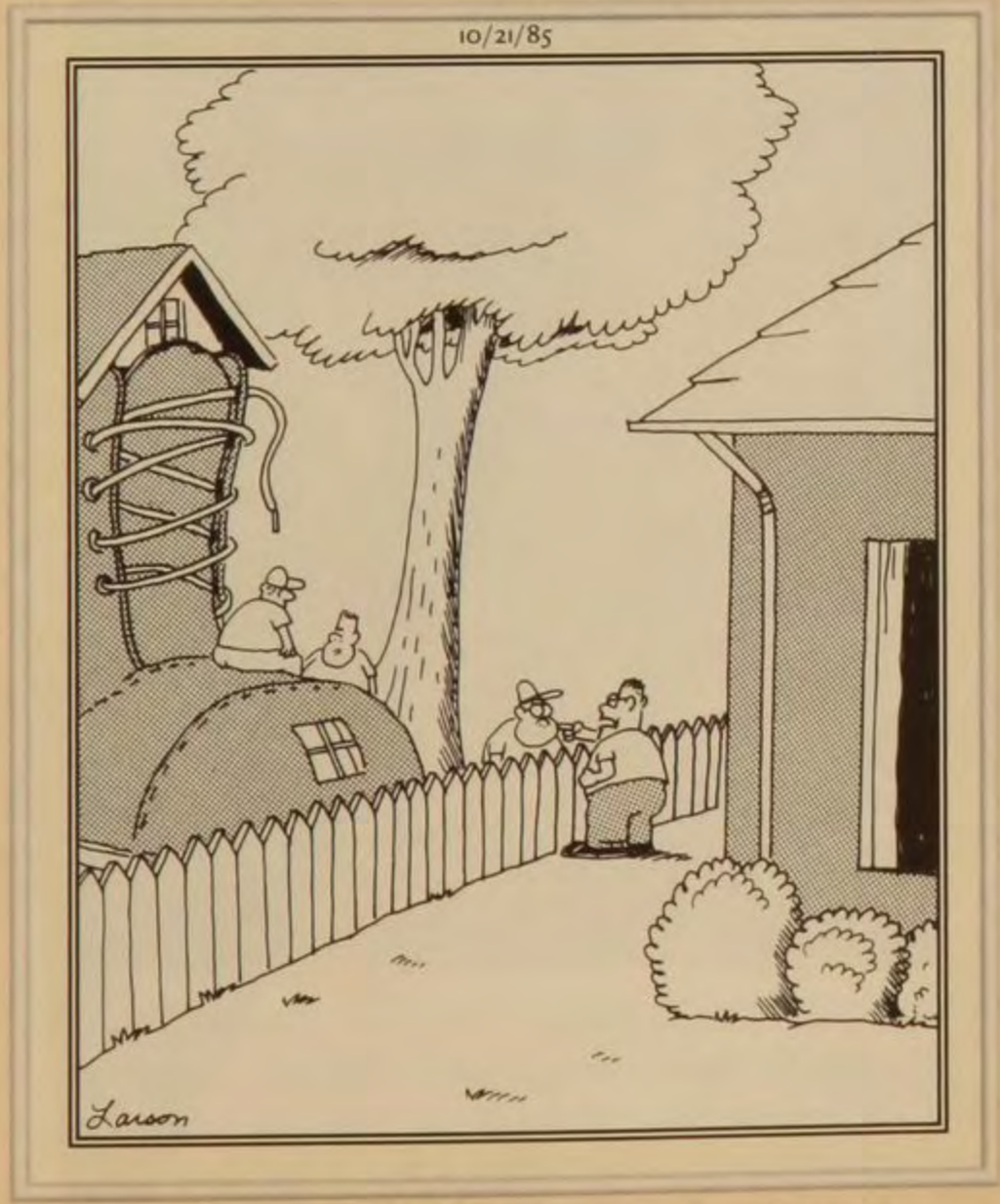


"Wait a minute, Stan. ... These are good hubcaps. If we don't take 'em, it's a cinch some other bears will."

October 1985



"Puuuuut the caaaaaat ouuuuuuuuut. ...
Puuuuut the caaaaat ouuuuuuut. ..."

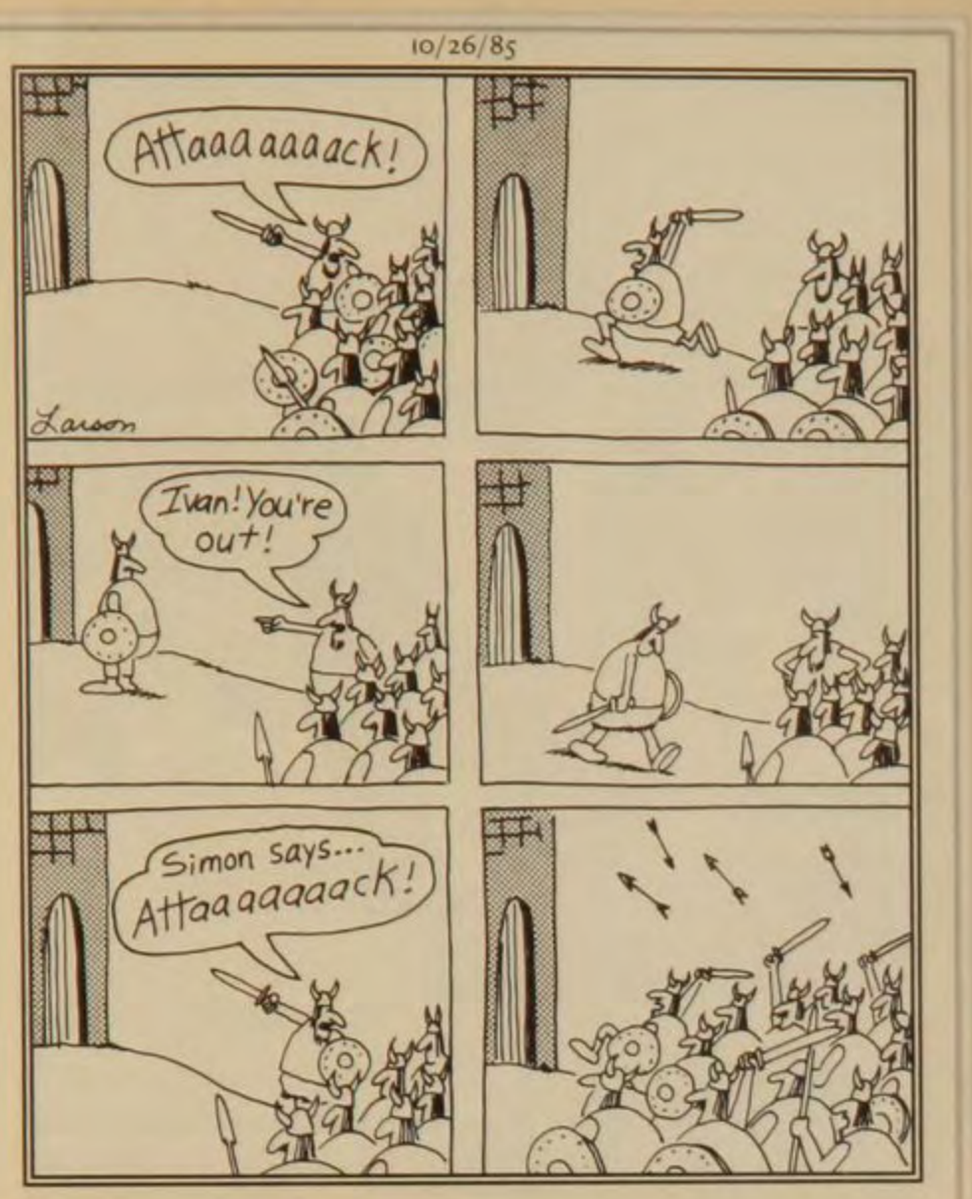


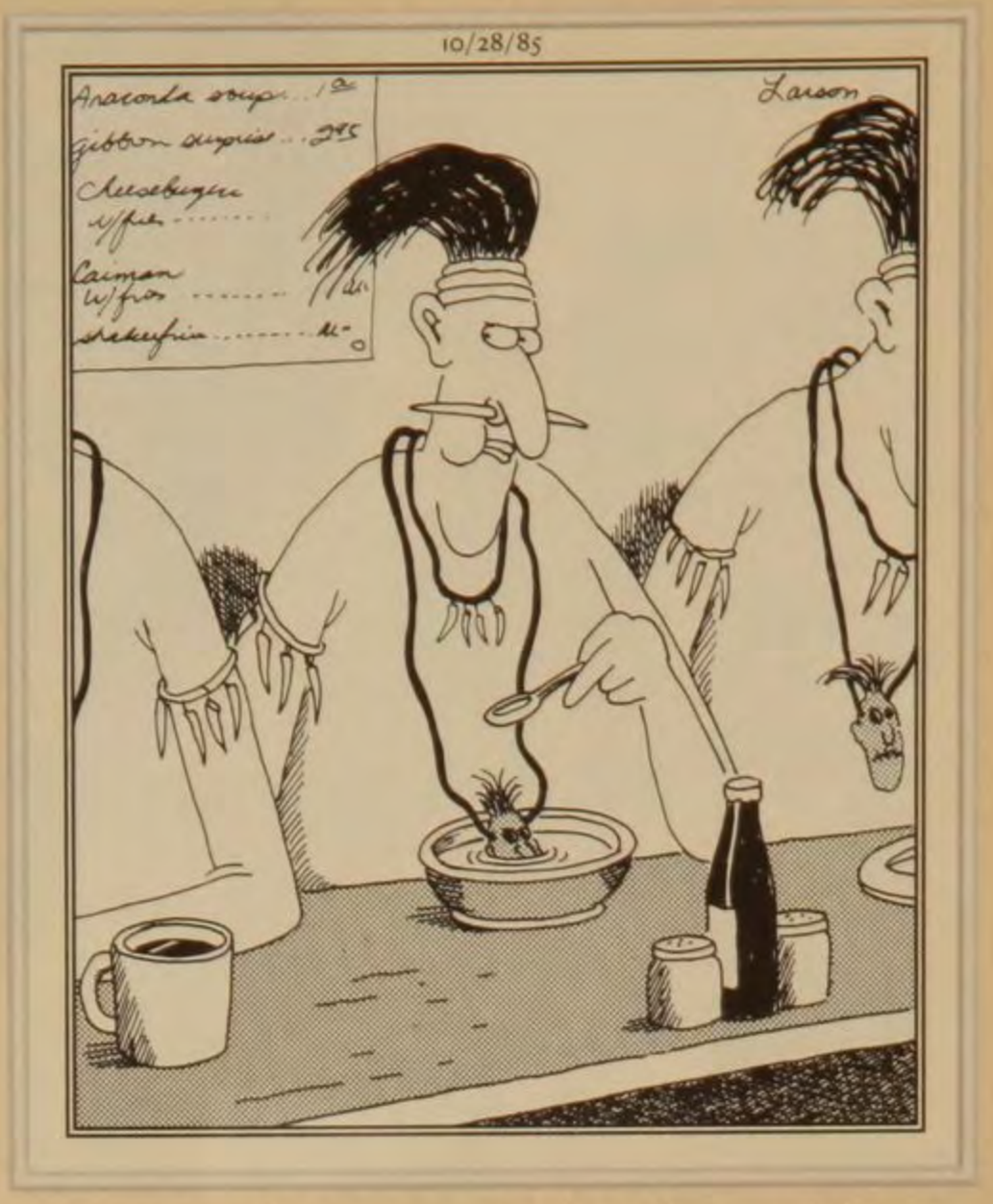
"Oh, yeaaaaah? ... *Your* mother *lives* in
an Army boot!"

October 1985

10/23/85
I;;;

October 1985





Nanoonga froze—worrying less about ruining a good head than he did the social faux pas.

Quasimodo ends his day.

The nightmare makers

November 1985

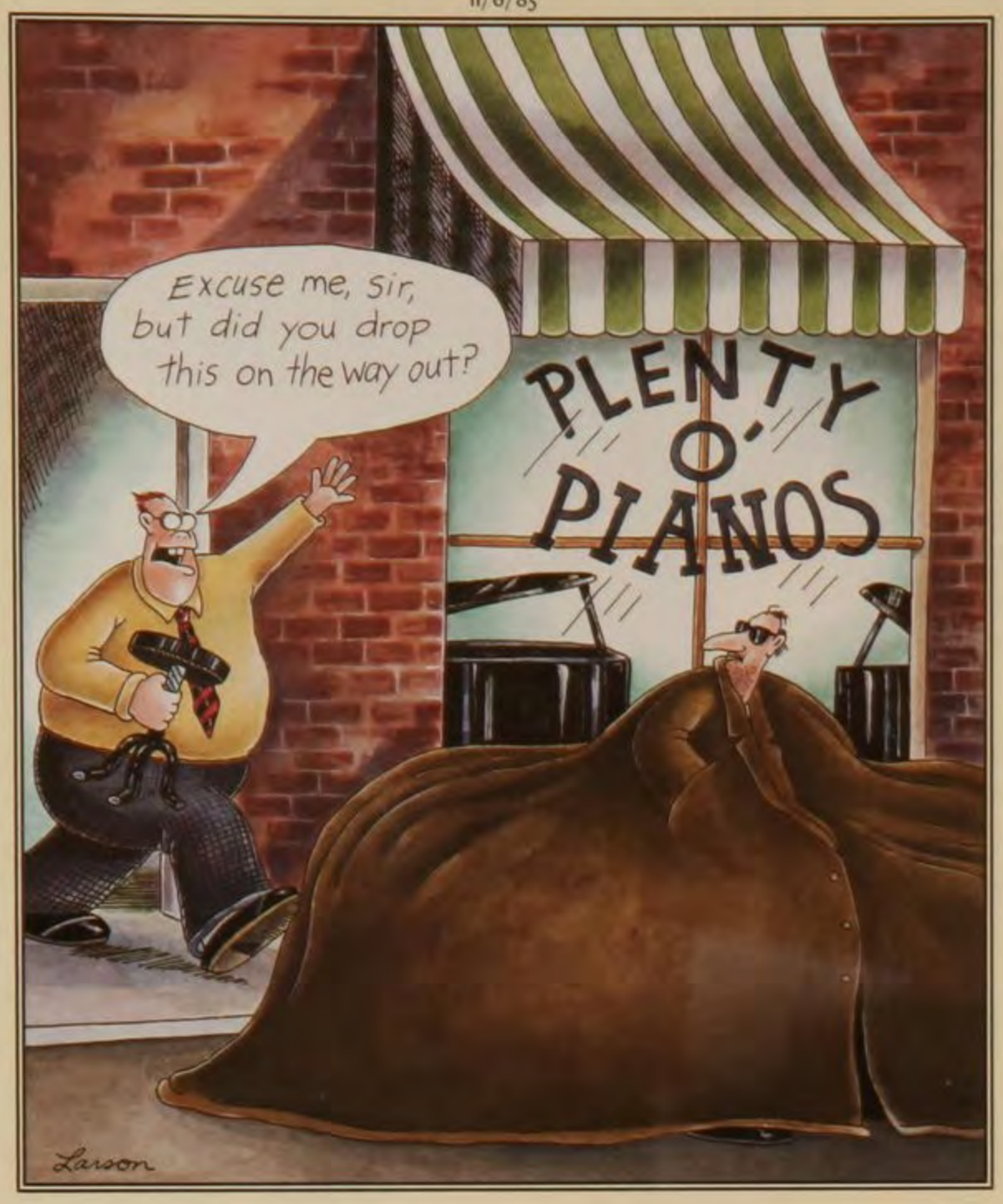
Manvark decimating an office mound

At the Comedians' Cemetery

The Great Nerd Drive of '76

November 1985

11/6/85

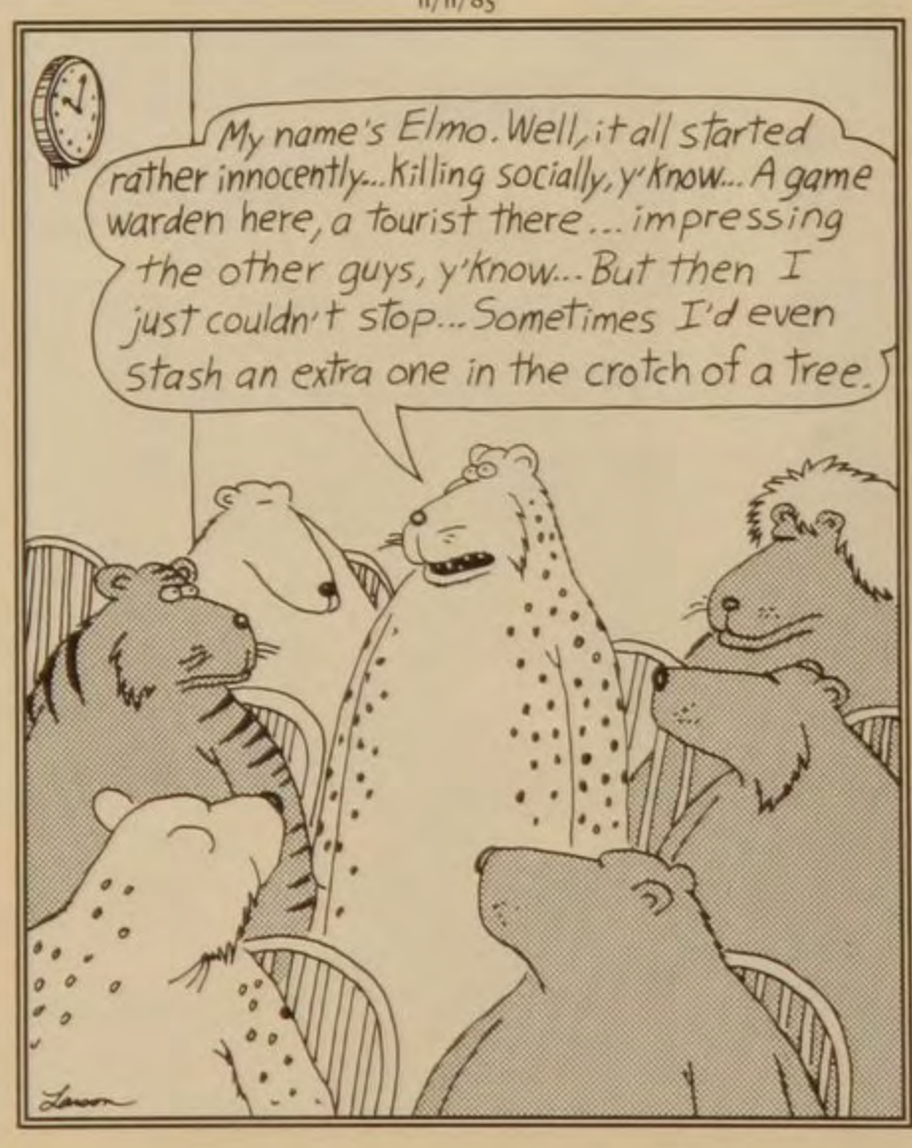


Stupid clerks

11/8/85

Tempers flare when Professors Carlson and Lazzell, working independently, ironically set their time machines to identical coordinates.

11/11/85



At Maneaters Anonymous

11/13/85

Eventually, Stevie looked up: His mother was nowhere in sight, and this was certainly no longer the toy department.

11/5/85

"If there're monsters moving in next door, Danny, you just ignore them. The more you believe in them, the more they'll try to get you."

11/7/85

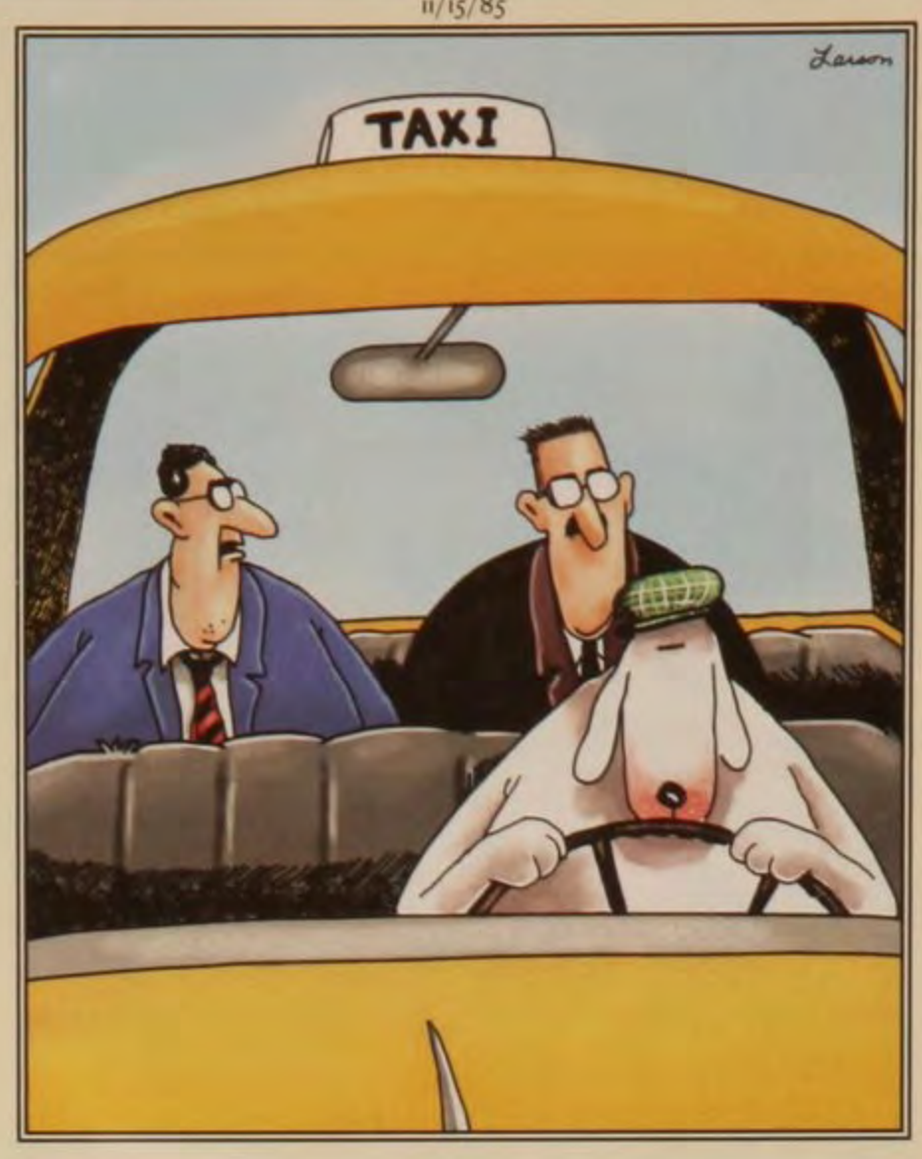
"The picture's pretty bleak, gentlemen. ... The world's climates are changing, the mammals are taking over, and we all have a brain about the size of a walnut."

November 1985

11/9/85

The morning dew sparkled on Bill's web. The decoys were in place, his fly call was poised, and luck was in the air.

11/15/85



"Well, we just took the wrong exit. I know this breed, Morrison—you have to watch them every minute or WHAM, they'll turn on you."

11/14/85

"Saaaaaay, aren't you a stranger in these parts? Well, I don't *take* candy from *strangers*."

November 1985

11/12/85

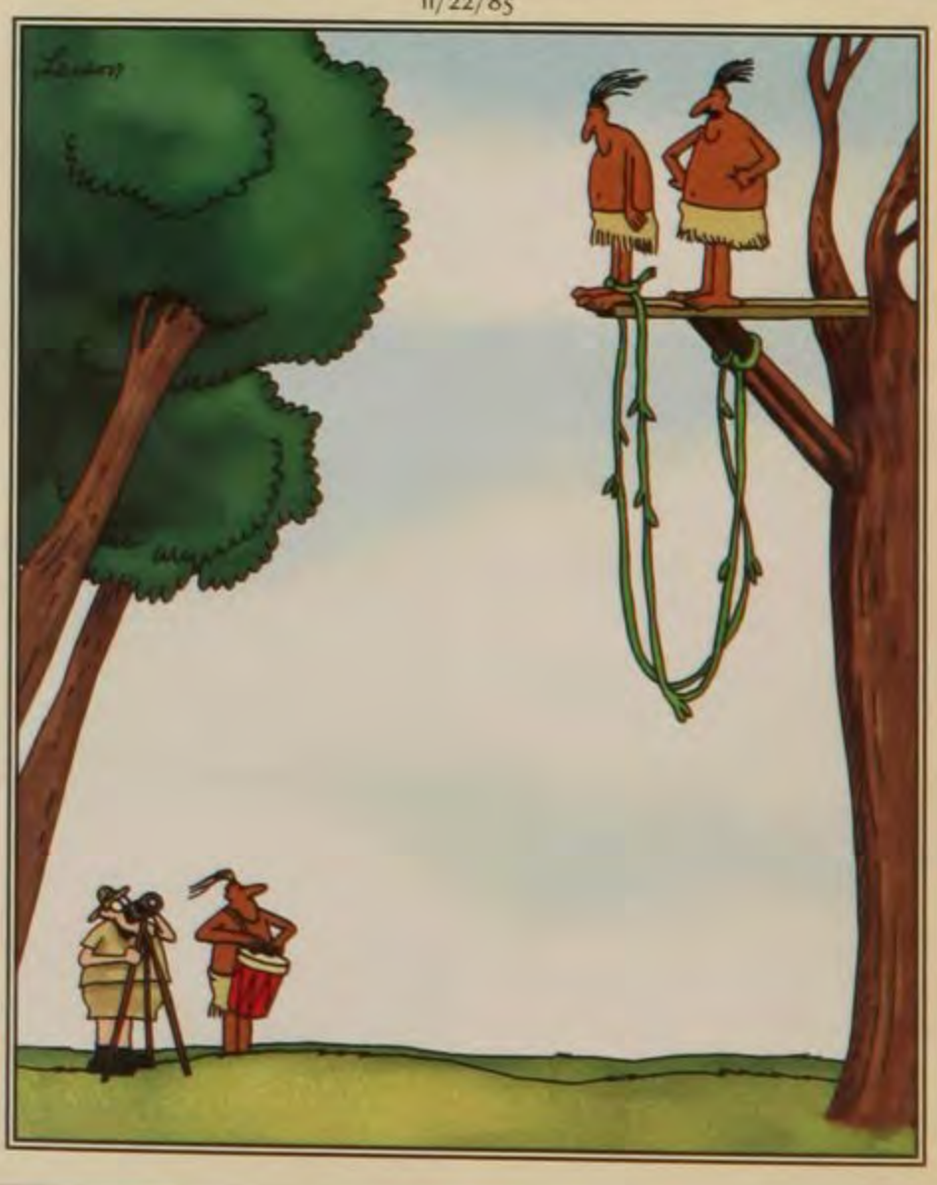
Garbage dumps of the wild

11/16/85

11/18/85

"Whoa! This just looks like regular spaghetti! ... Where's my Earthworms Alfredo?"

11/22/85



"C'mon, c'mon! You've done this a hundred times, Uzula; the vines *always* snap you back just before you hit. ... Remember, that's *National Geographic* down there."

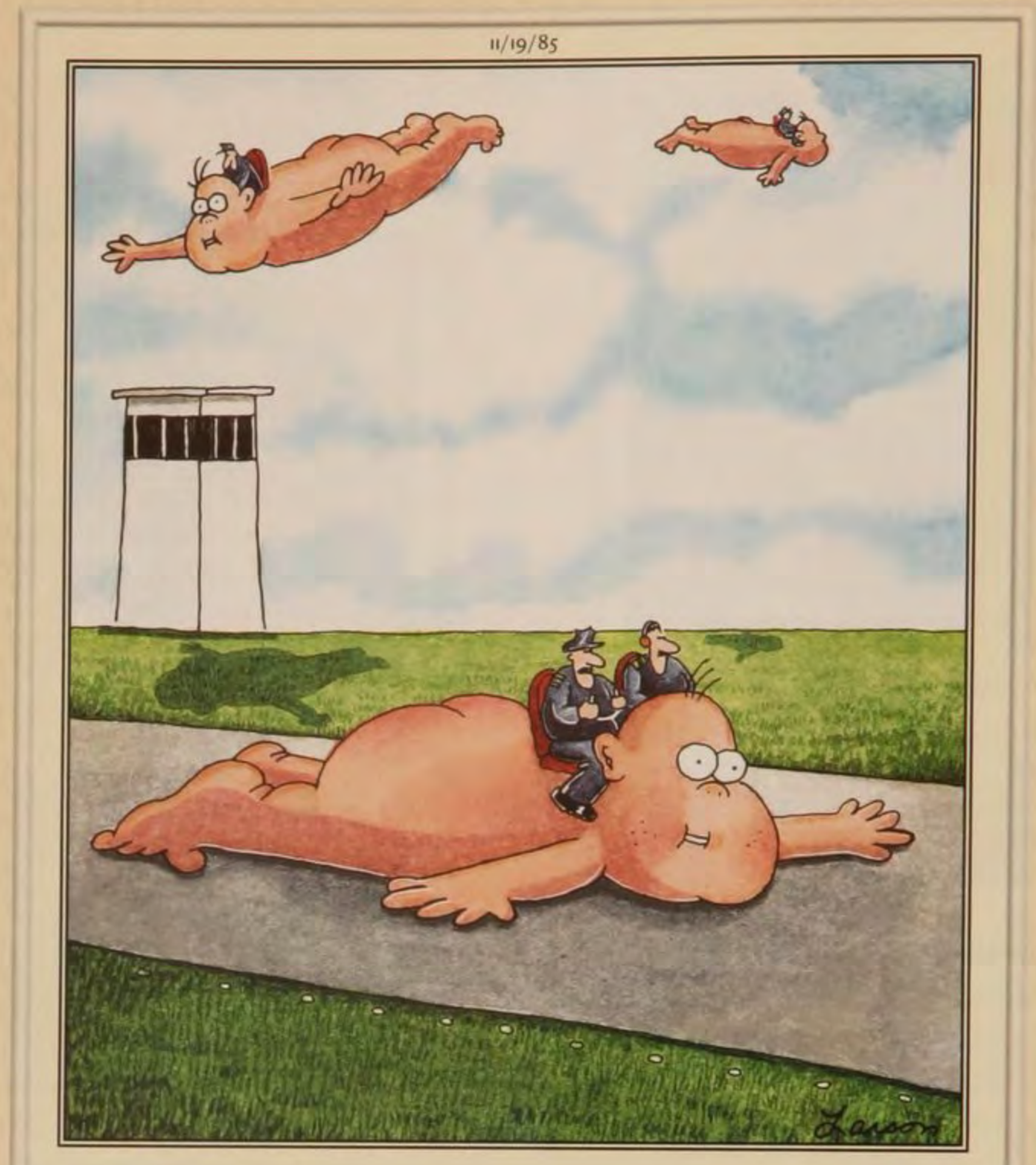
November 1985

"Well, guess who's home a little early from today's castle siege?"

Dog endorsements

The Fords of Norway

November 1985



"Fuel ... check. Lights ... check. Oil pressure ... check. We've got clearance. Okay, Jack—let's get this baby off the ground."

"Hey! Where's everybody going? *I* still have one or two empty stomachs."

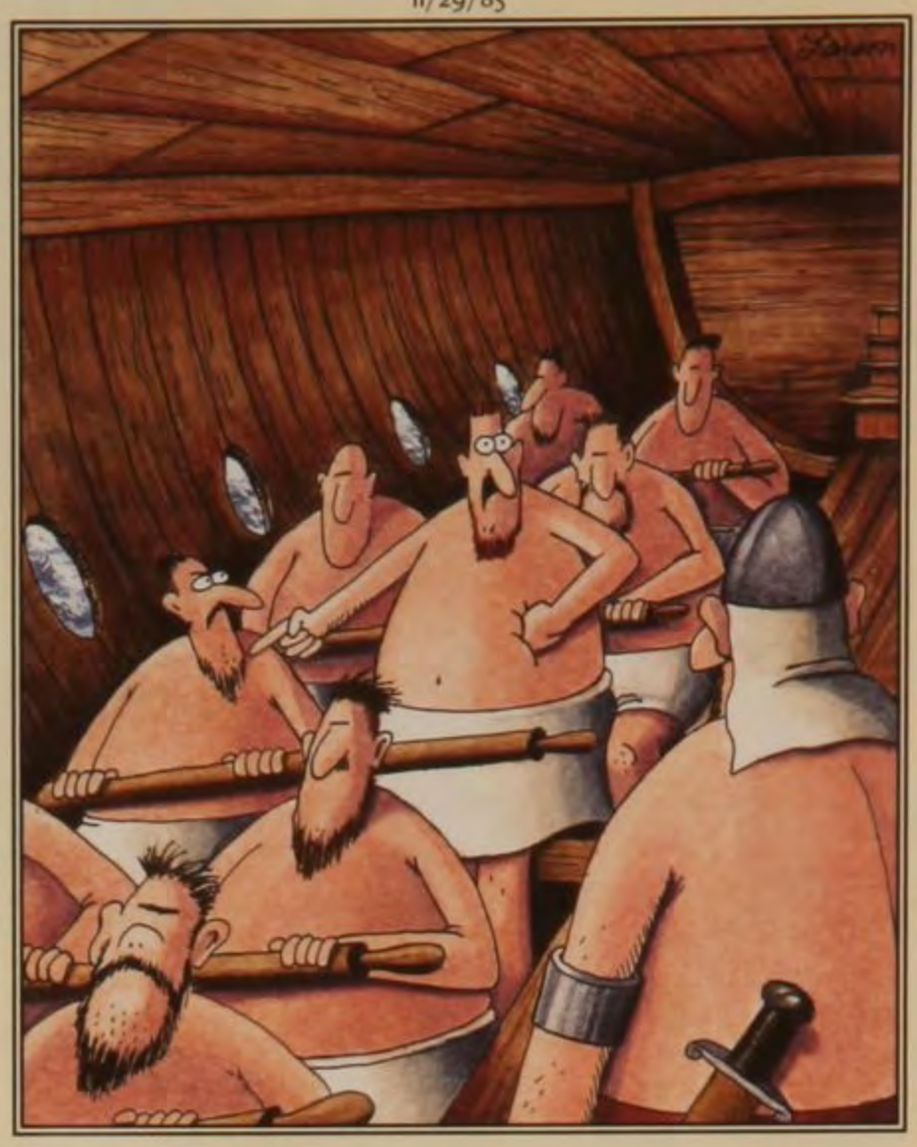
"The big fellah's gonna be A-OK, Mrs. Dickerson. Now, a *square* knot would've been bad news, but this just appears to be a 'granny.'"

November 1985

11/30/85

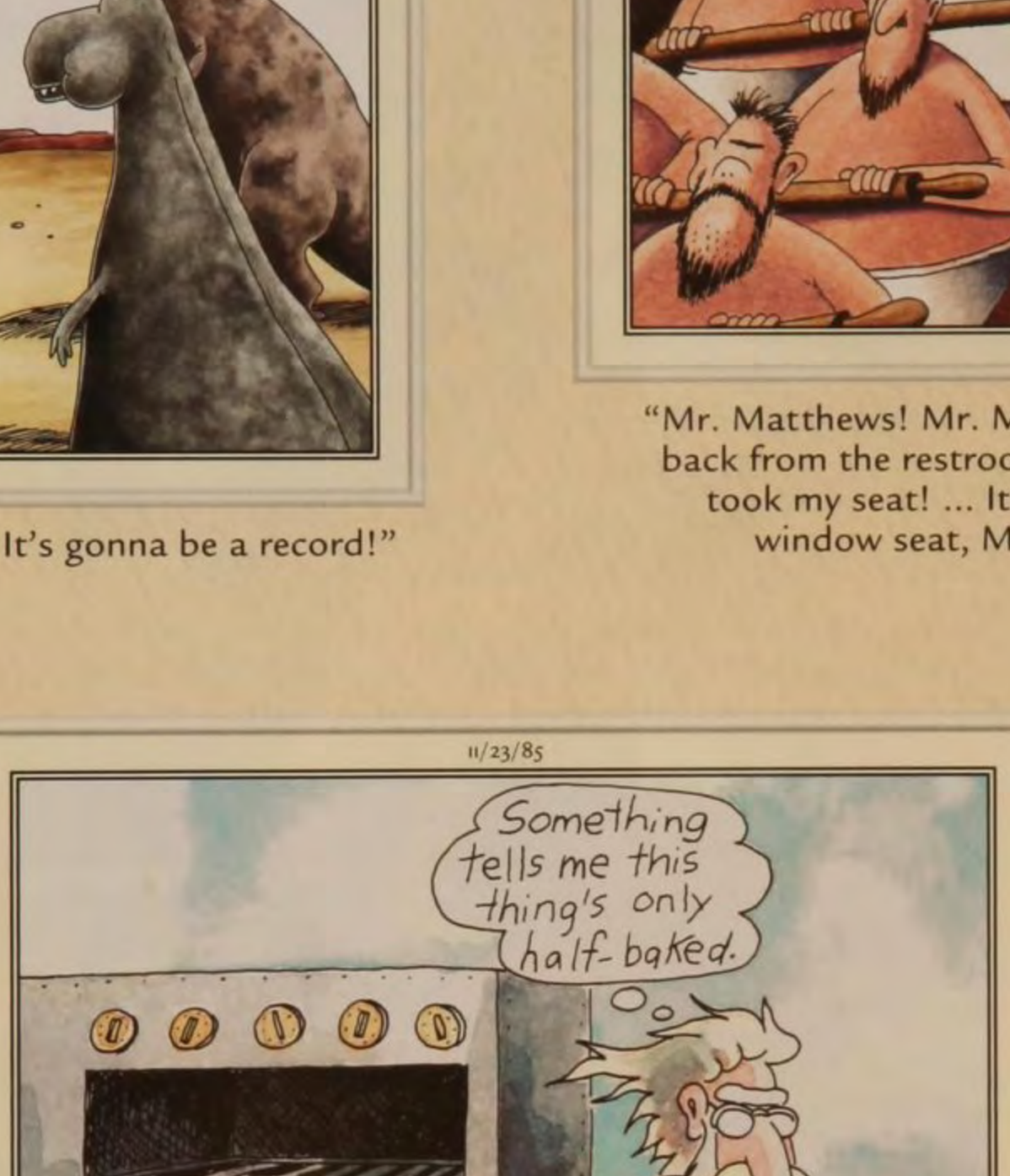
"Bigger, Wayne, bigger! It's gonna be a record!"

11/29/85



"Mr. Matthews! Mr. Matthews! I just came back from the restroom and Hodges here took my seat! ... It's my turn for the window seat, Mr. Matthews!"

11/23/85



In God's kitchen

December 1985

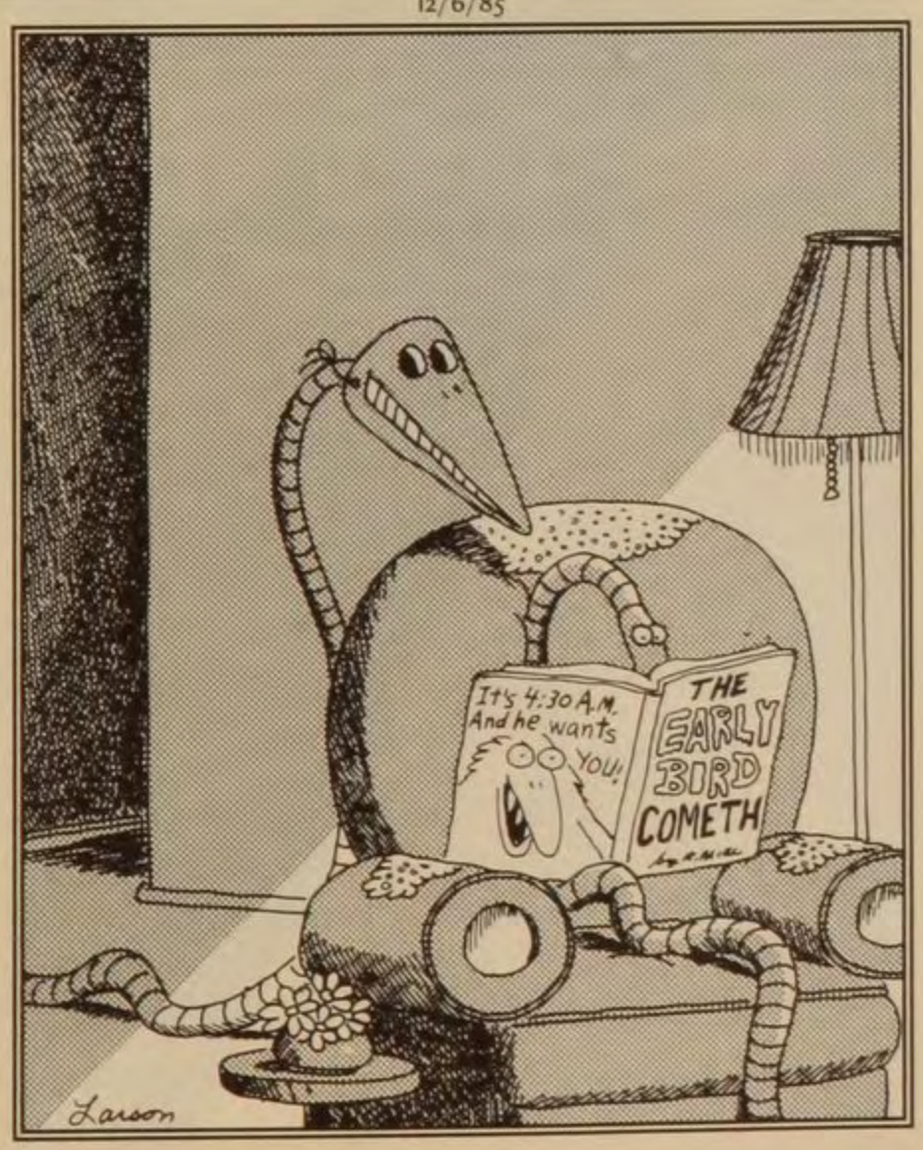
A lucky night for Goldy

December 1985

12/12/85

As quickly as it had started, the egg fight was over.

12/6/85



Invertebrate practical jokes

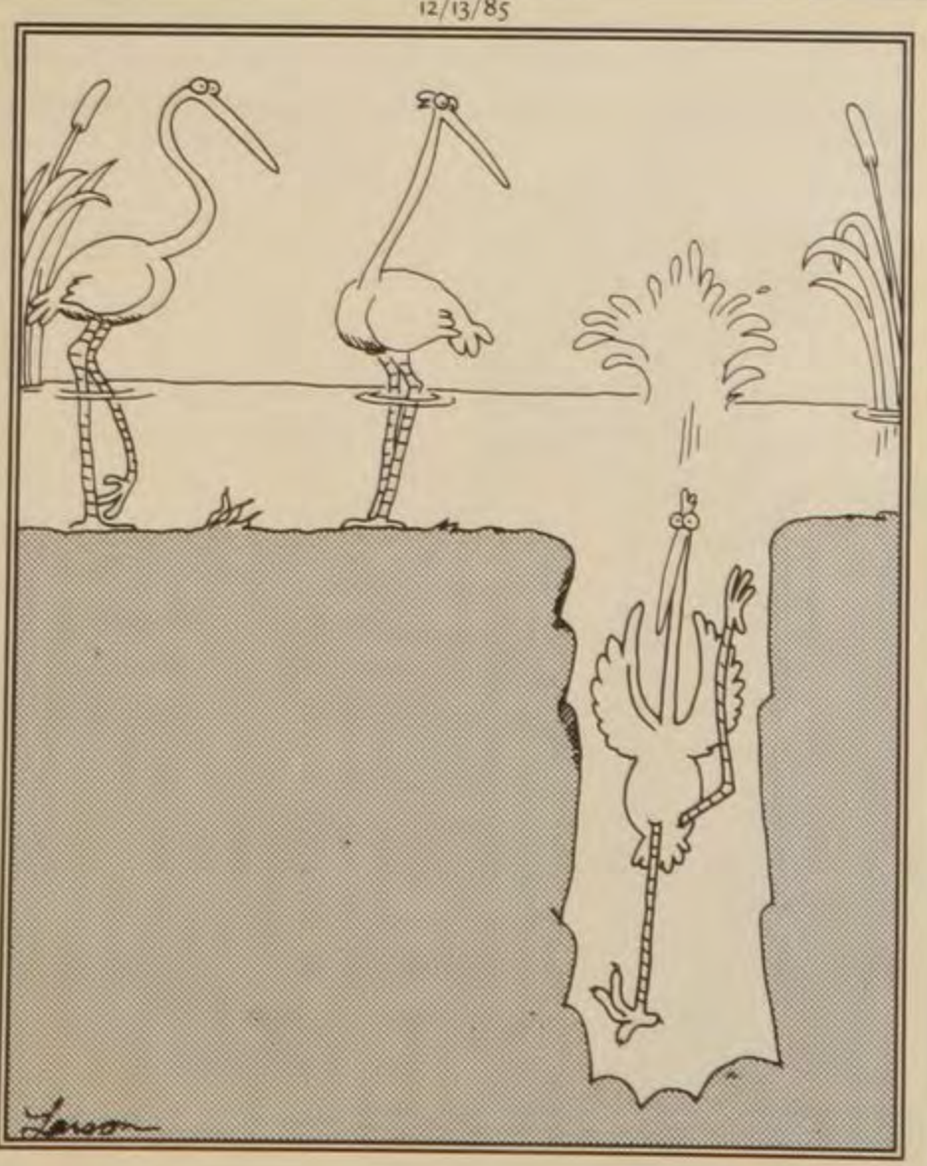
12/7/85

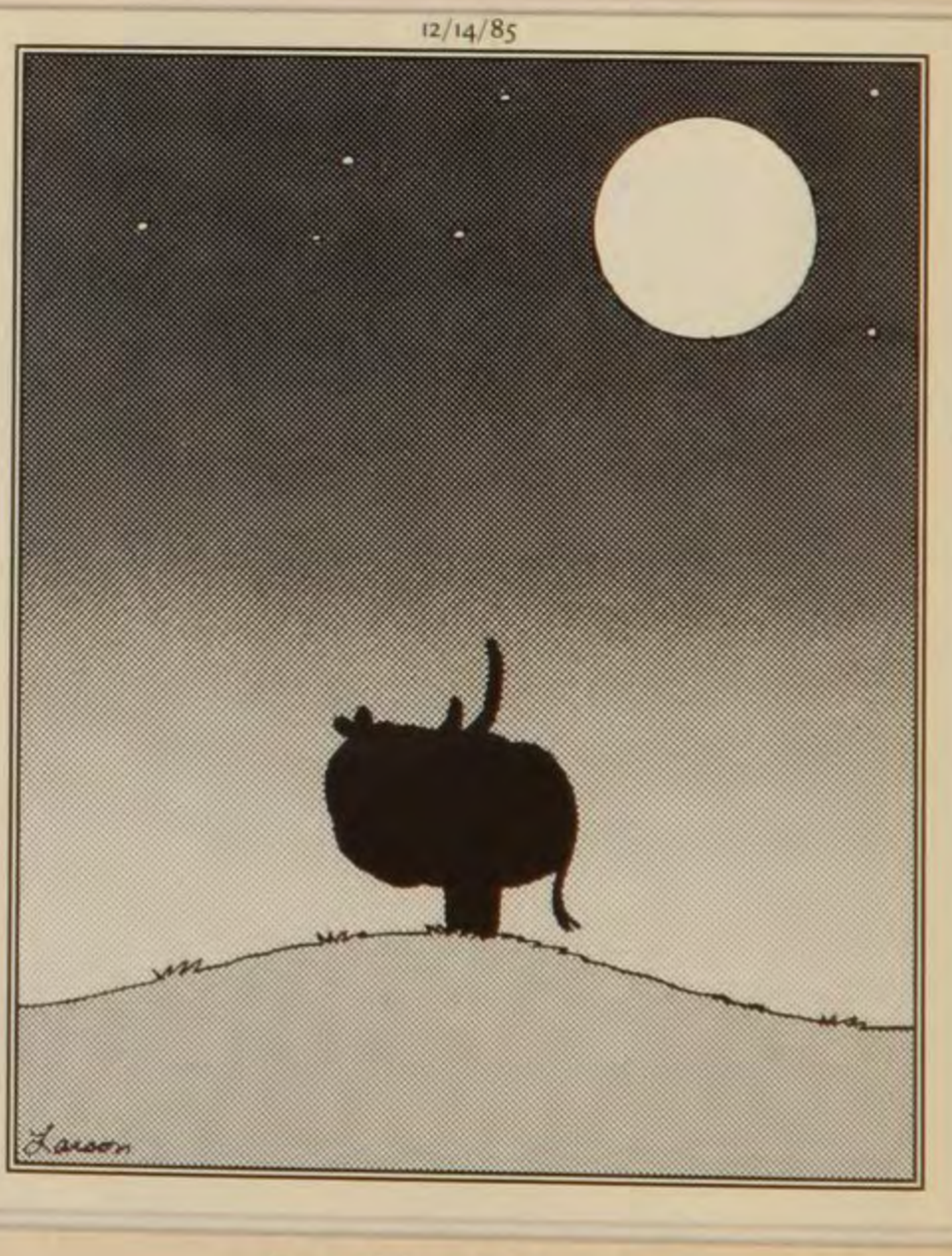
"Oh, you think that's something? See this scar right here ... that's from one nasty little dik-dik."

December 1985

"C'mon, Arlene. Just a few feet in and then we can stand."

As Harriet turned the page, a scream escaped her lips: There was Donald—his strange disappearance no longer a mystery.





The rhino in repose

December 1985

12/11/85

"Oh, yeah? If you're alone,
then whose eye is that?"

12/16/85

Early business failures

12/17/85

"Igor! Get that Wolfman doll out of his face! ...
Boy, sometimes you really are bizarre."

12/18/85

"Hey! I can hear the traffic!"

December 1985

12/10/85

Testing whether or not animals "kiss."

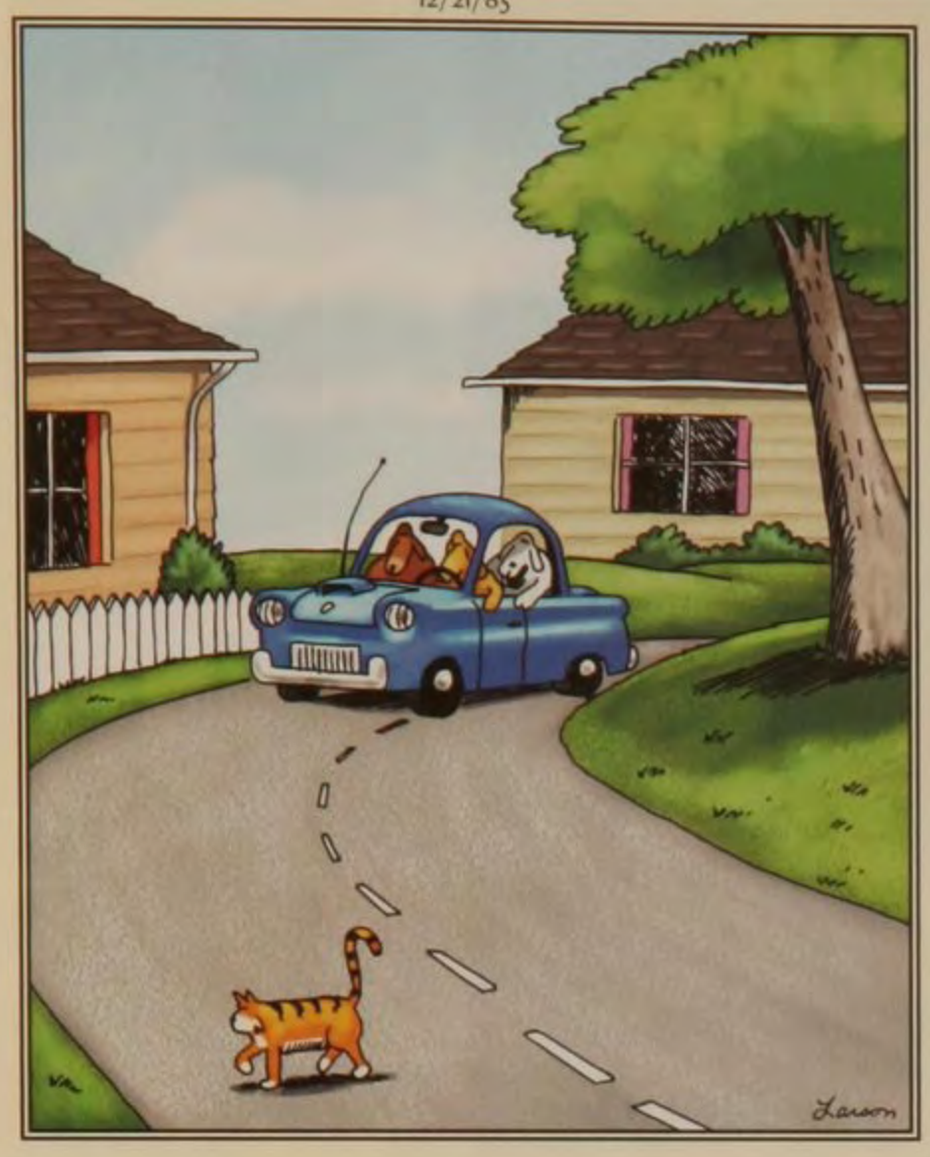
12/20/85

12/25/85

Animal game shows

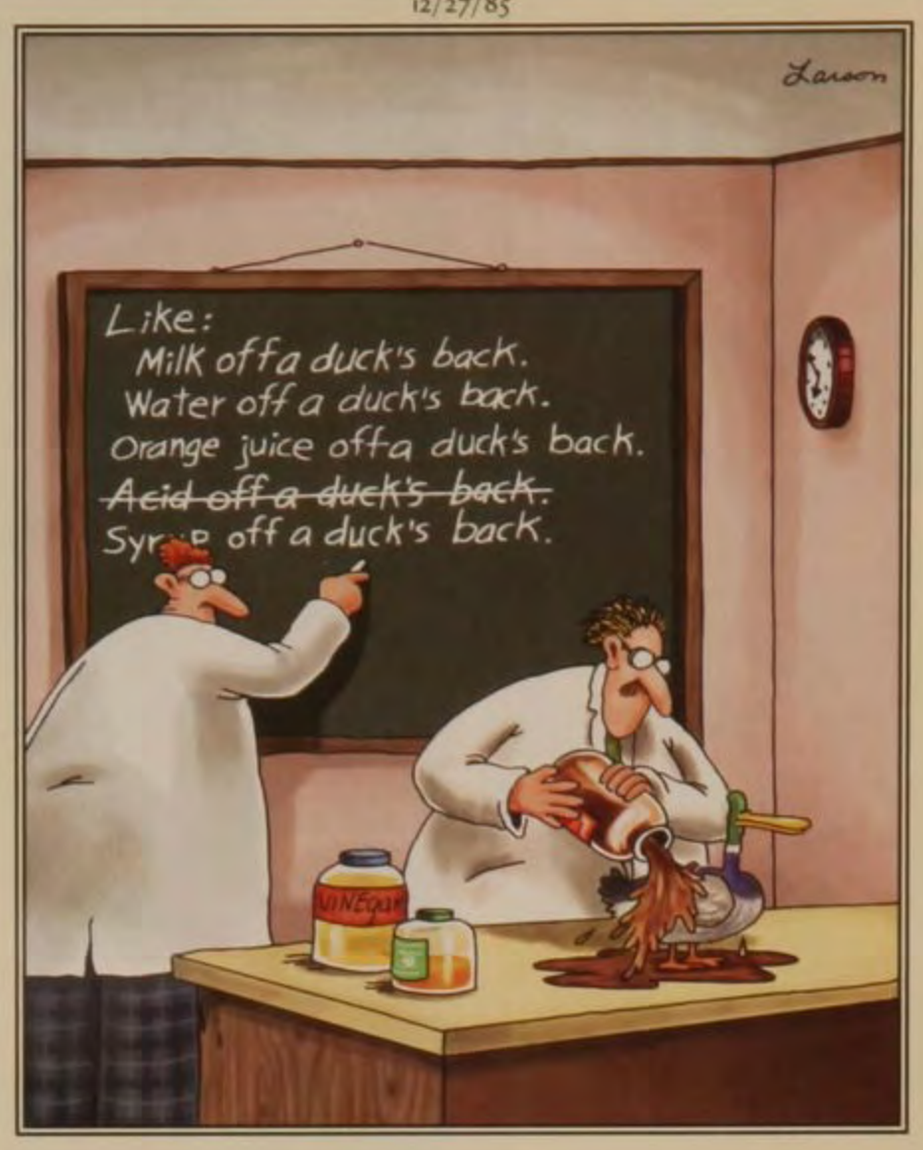
December 1985

12/21/85



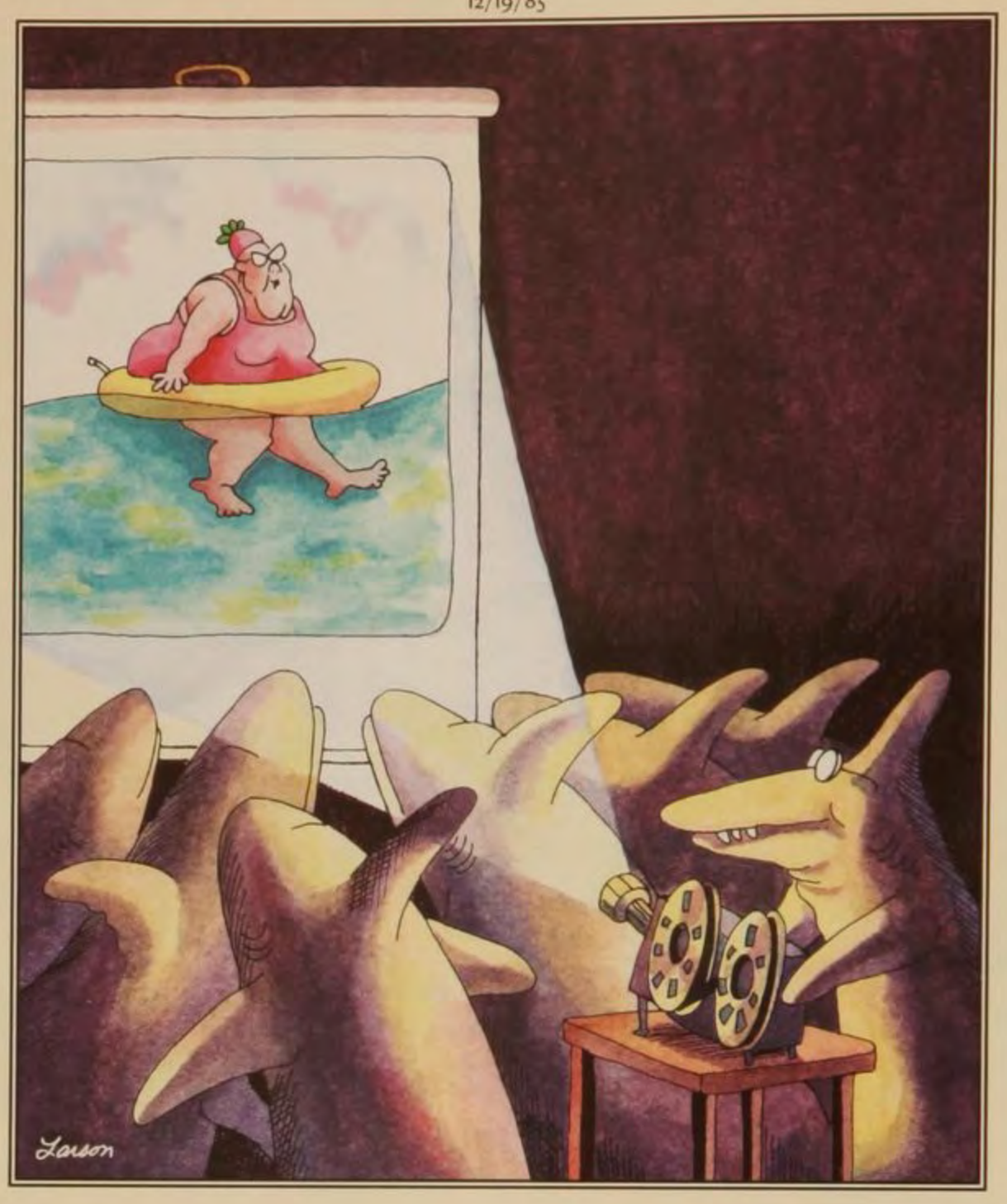
"Rusty! Two points!"

12/27/85



12/30/85

12/19/85



Shark nerds always ran the projector.

12/23/85

When careers and allergies collide

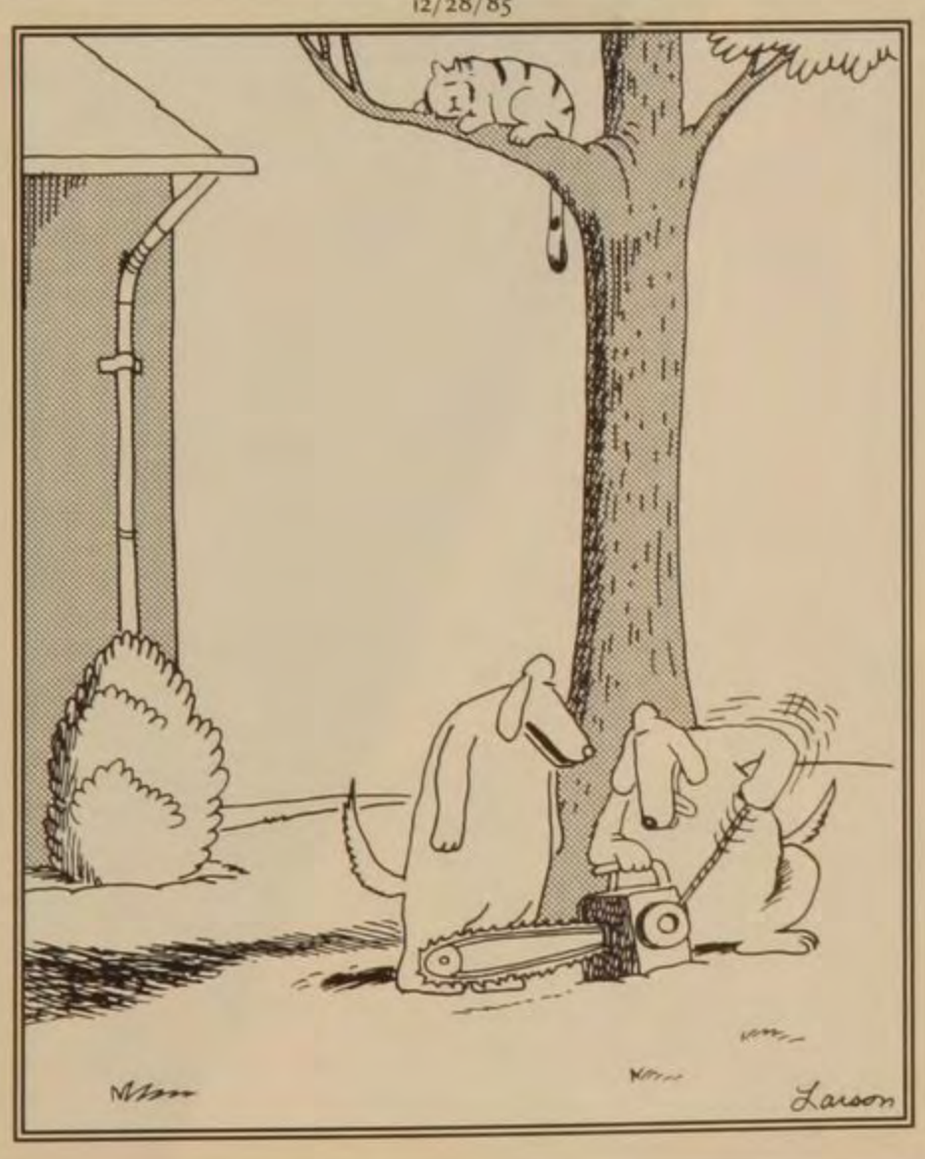
12/24/85

December 1985

12/26/85

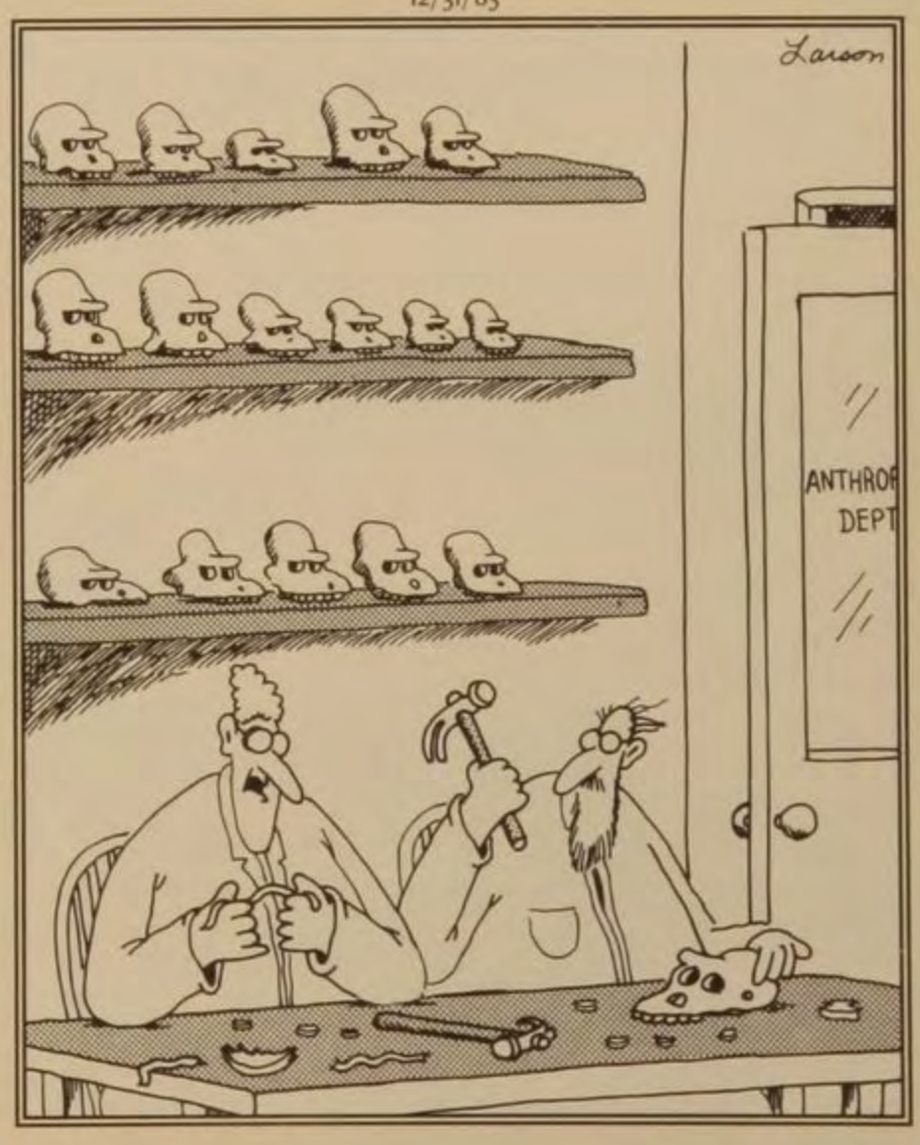
Tarzan is greeted by the Parakeet People.

12/28/85



"You have to prime it, you know."

12/31/85



"This is getting pretty eerie, Simmons. ...
Another skull, another fortune."

9
1

The Eye and I

I've already told one story about my childhood fear of monsters, but please allow me one more. This one is different, because something more than a good scare was burned into my psyche; I learned a precious lesson one night that has stayed with me. The lesson was about *craft*. I paid a high price to get it, but for you, my friends, it's free.

Growing up, I had a fear of my closet. The basement was of intermittent concern, but my bedroom closet, for obvious reasons, was a nightly menace. Something hideous lived in there, and that something wanted me. I knew it, it knew I knew it, and we both knew my parents knew nothing. (That's the way these things usually go.)

Fortunately, there was one rule imposed on my closet monster: If the sliding door was kept shut, I was safe. I'm talking *completely* shut—no room for errors here. I don't know where this rule came from or why the monster even honored it, but I knew it kept me alive. I knew it, it knew it, and, well—I won't wear that out.

One night I was in bed, reading. Only my lamp was on, so the rest of the room glowed in your standard, eerie semi-darkness loved by all monsters. As usual, I couldn't keep myself from glancing up at the closet every so often; you know, just monitoring the situation. And on this night—the night that changed me forever—I looked up and saw my worst fear realized. Very, very slightly, maybe by just a half-inch or so, the closet door was open. I was looking at a dark crack that led into the bowels of hell. How could this have happened? How did I overlook something so essential to my very existence?

My dilemma was this: I could try to make it over to the main light switch, through the said eerie semi-darkness, but that was a long way across the room—at least eight feet, I'm guessing—far, far from the safety of my bed. (The Safety of the Bed Rule is a whole other issue, with complex sub-rules and regulations; for brevity's sake, I'll not discuss it here.) Or, I could walk over to the closet and simply shut it, but I knew that's *exactly* what the thing inside wanted me to do! I was a chicken, not a fool.

I stared at that horrible sliver of darkness in the corner of my room until I could at last force my eyes back down in an effort to keep reading. But I hadn't read much before I looked up again. My stomach rolled over. The door, it *seemed,* had opened just a little wider. No, it *couldn't*

have moved. It *had* to be just my imagination. I lowered my eyes. Two seconds later, I looked up again. The closet door had opened further. There was no doubt. The slit was now open a full inch.

What happened next was all rather dreamlike. I was so scared I couldn't move, I couldn't even scream. (You know, it's that basic law of terror that a primal scream is sort of like a starter's pistol to all the participants in your own death. You scream, you die.) With my heart and adrenal glands going berserk, my eyes just burned into that inch-wide abyss. And as I stared, something very slowly took shape: Framed within that narrow slit, a single, listless eye stared back at me.

It was time to scream. Without taking my eyes off that horrible eye, my vocal cords opened up into a glorious, all-out shriek. Unfortunately, my scream also indicated to the monster that the jig was up; it was time to kill. As I watched (and screamed), the closet door began to slide open. Not hurriedly, but very, very slowly, with deadly deliberation. The thing inside knew it had me; there was no need to hurry.

And from the depths of the closet, something emerged. And that something was ... my older brother, Dan.

Chaos immediately reigned. My mom came running in, flipped on the light, absorbed the situation, and began to chew out my brother while I remained in bed, crying and hyperventilating. Blah blah blah, end of story. Ah, but the lesson about craft.

Dan was like some master from the Shau Lin Temple of Scaring Younger Brothers. The instant I had screamed, any hack would have crudely flung the closet door open, jumped out, and vocalized some corny, monster-cliché kind of sound. Not Dan. The nuances of fear—the nuances of humor—were imbued in him. Think of how long he must have hidden in that closet, patiently waiting for me to go to bed. He had studied me. He knew what scared me. He knew enough to open that door in such small increments that I would doubt what was actually happening. And in the end, he slid that door open with a methodical, uncanny perfection, letting me watch the horror unfold as if it were all a dream. He never yelled. The sound of that door rolling on its casters was enough. He simply "emerged"—smoothly, unhurriedly—from the darkness. He let my mind fill in all the blanks.

Craft. I hate craft.

January 1986

"Never mind my name. You just tell your boss some *thing* is here to see him!"

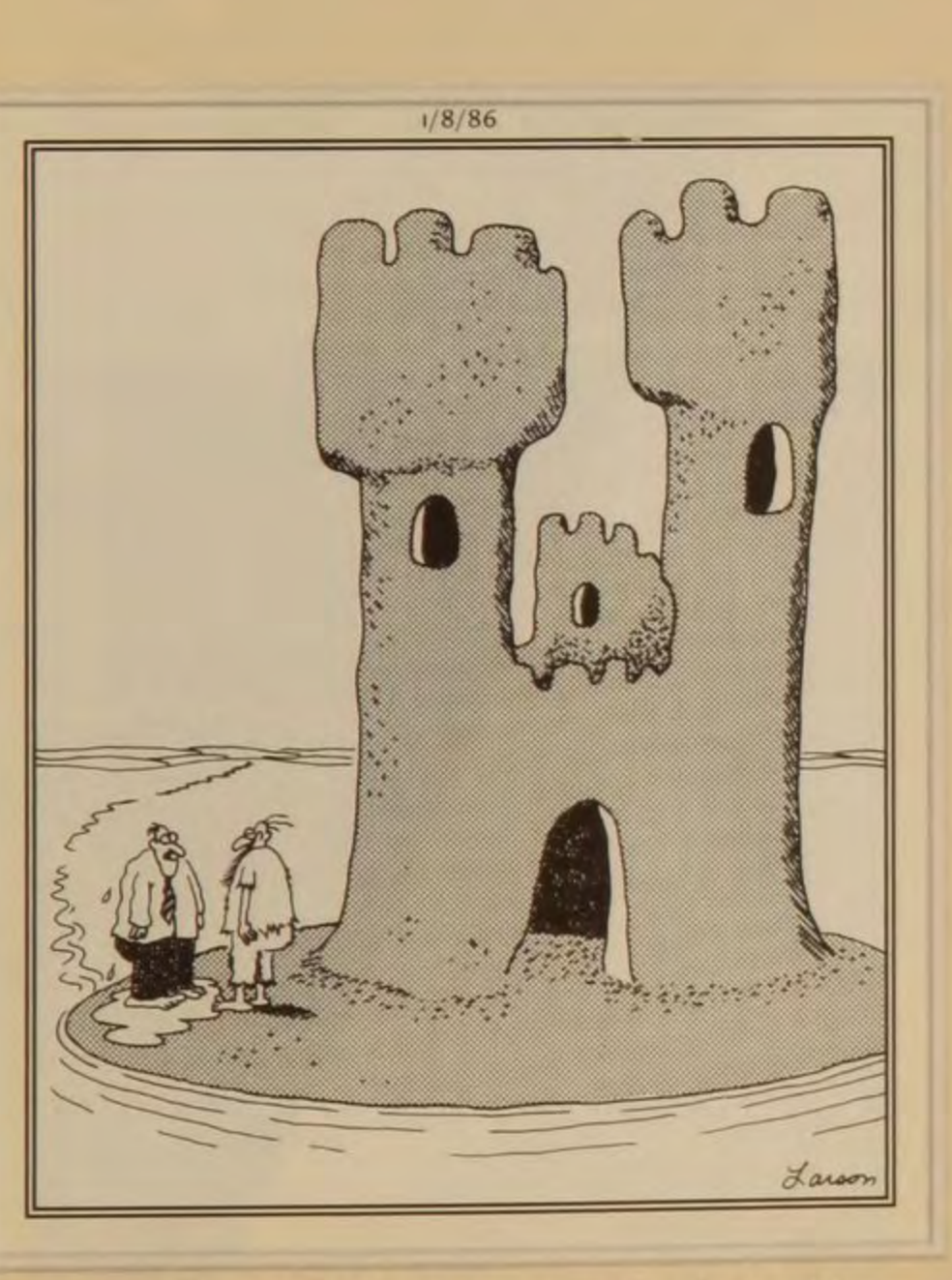
Butterflies from the wrong side of the meadow

"Ed ... the 'later' is back."

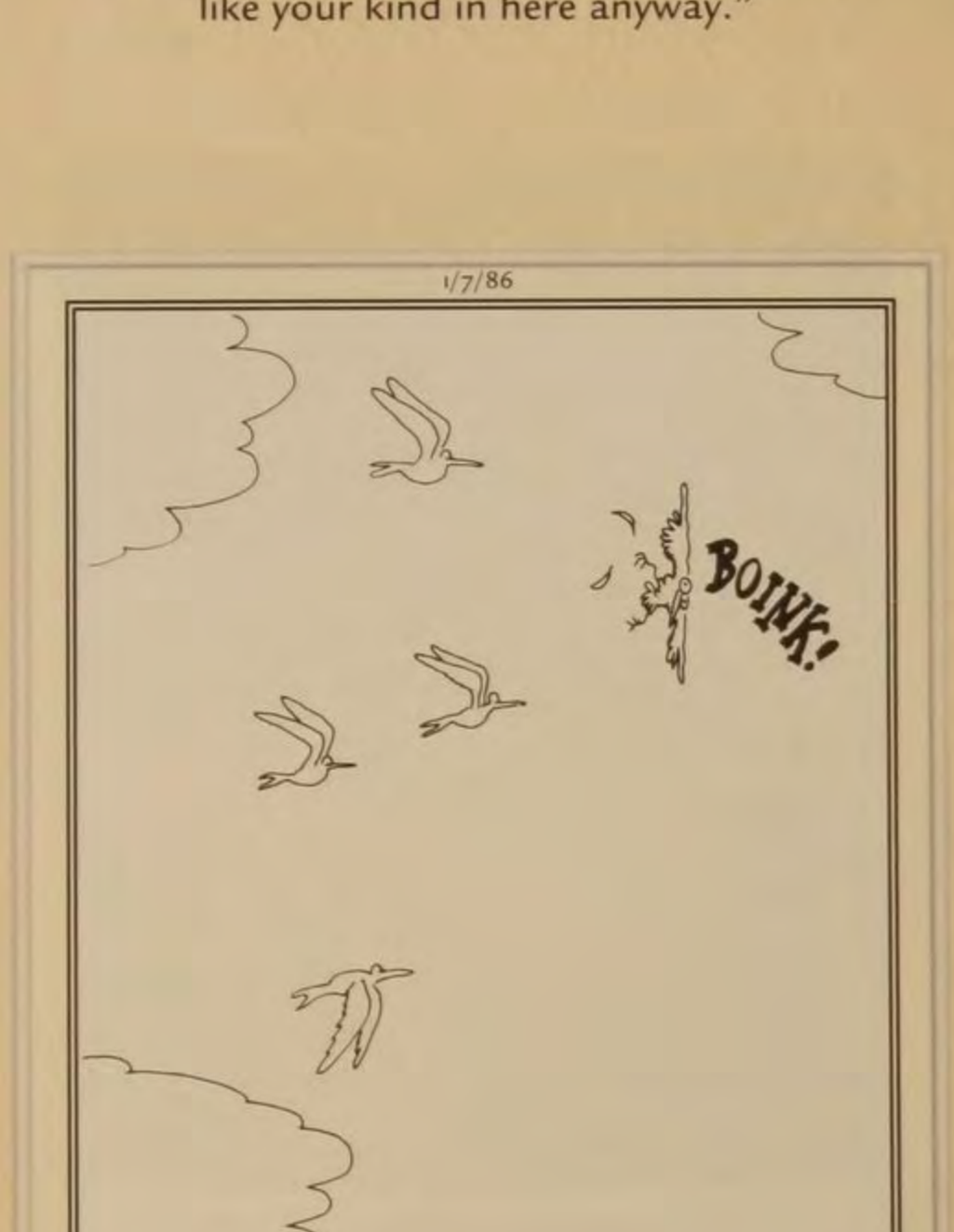
Thwarting the vampcow

"Yup. This year they're comin' along reeeeeeal good. ... 'Course, you can always lose a few to an early frost or young pups."

"Hey, look. Number 1, we're closed, Number 2, I only work here, and Number 3, we don't like your kind in here anyway."



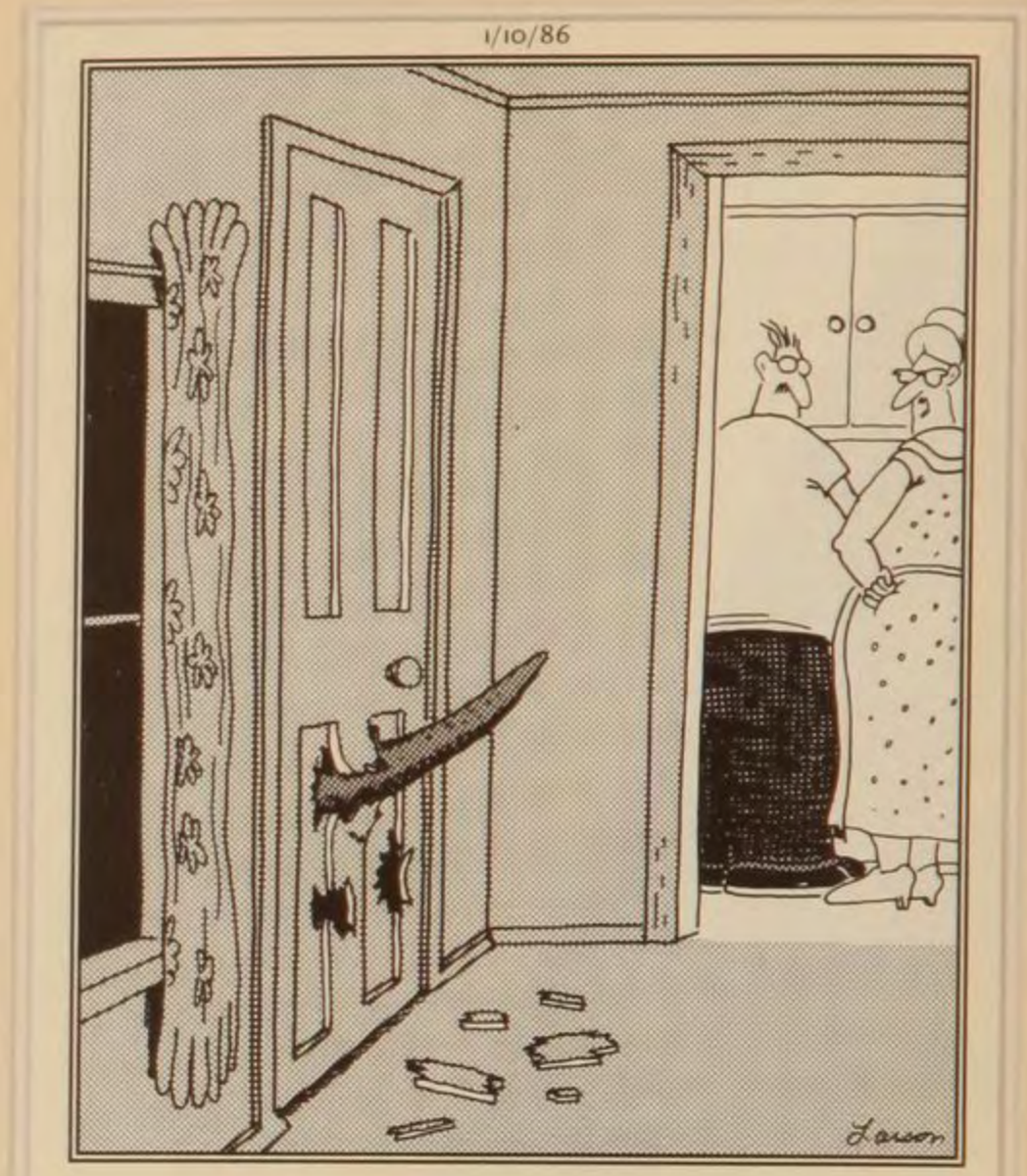
"And the next thing I knew, the whole ship just sunk right out from under me. So what's the deal with you? ... You been here long or what?"



When migration routes encounter the window of vulnerability

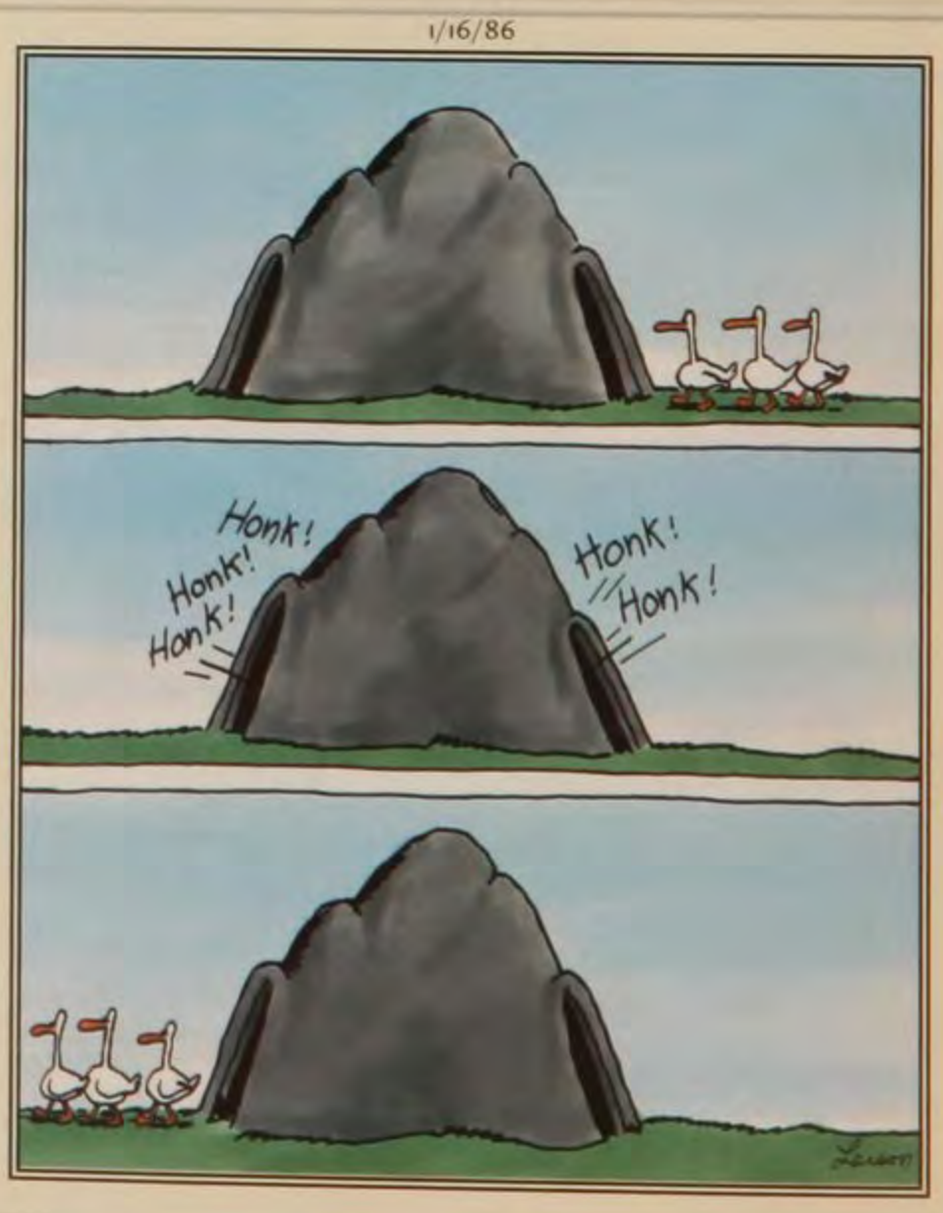
January 1986

In its early stage, it was simply known as the Olduvai Pothole.



"For heaven's sake, Lee. That spoiled rhino is going to either bellow or charge the door all night till we let him in."

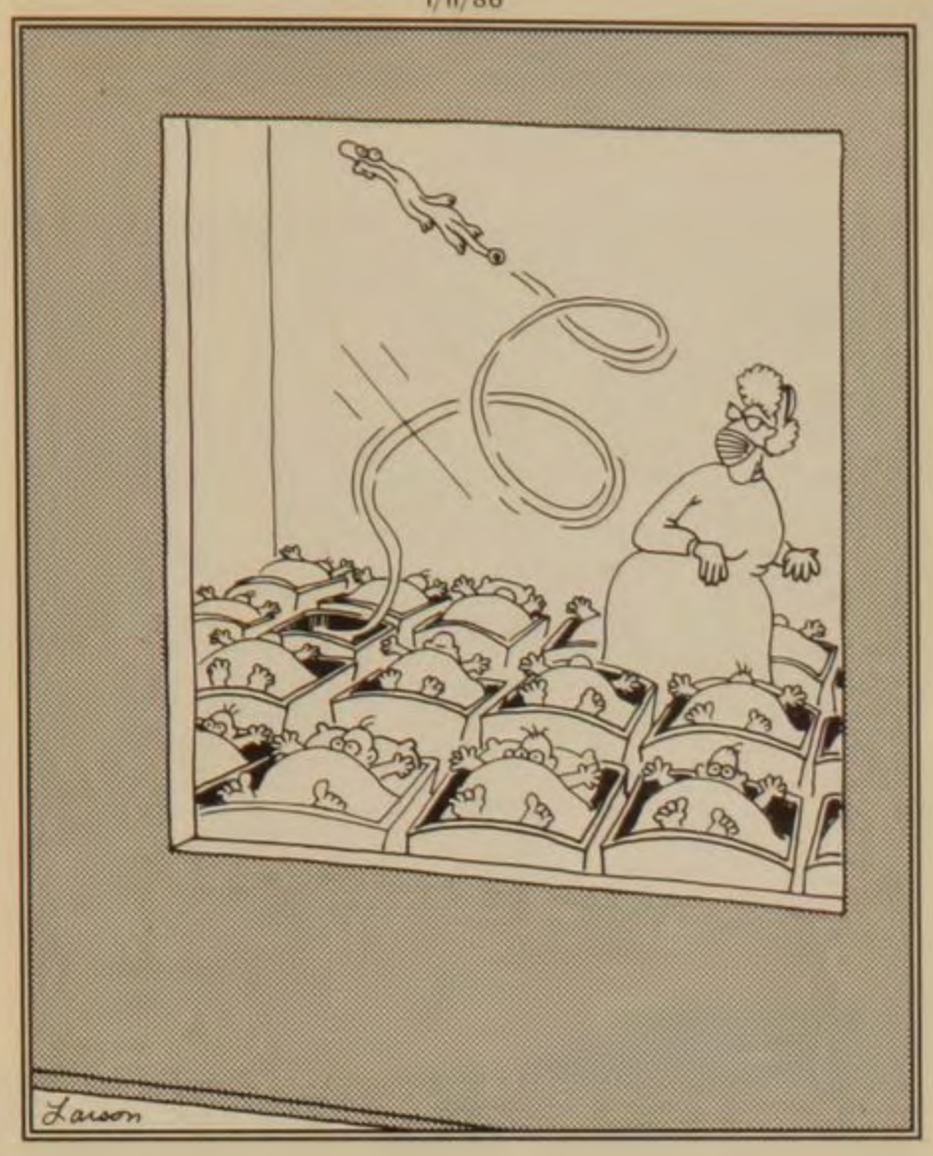
"So what's this? I asked for a hammer!
A *hammer! This* is a crescent wrench! ...
Well, maybe it's a hammer. ...
Damn these stone tools!"



Whenever geese pass through tunnels

January 1986

1/11/86



Belly button slipknots

1/13/86

Gross stories

1/15/86

Practical jokes of the wild

1/18/86

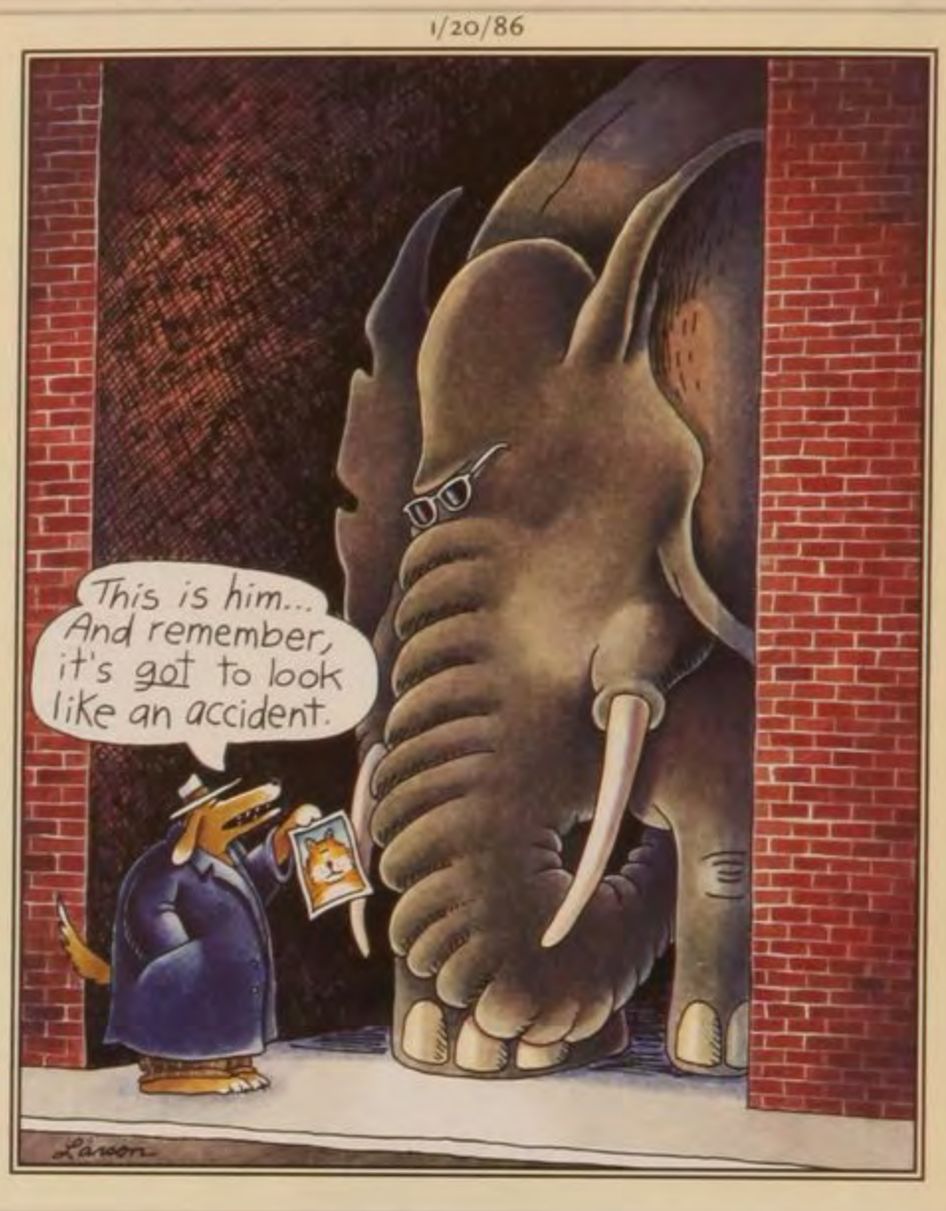
"Don't be 'fraid, Dug. Me teach him sit on finger. ... Closer, Dug, closer."

January 1986

1/22/86

Working alone, Professor Dawson stumbles into a bad section of the petri dish.

1/20/86



Hit elephants

1/21/86

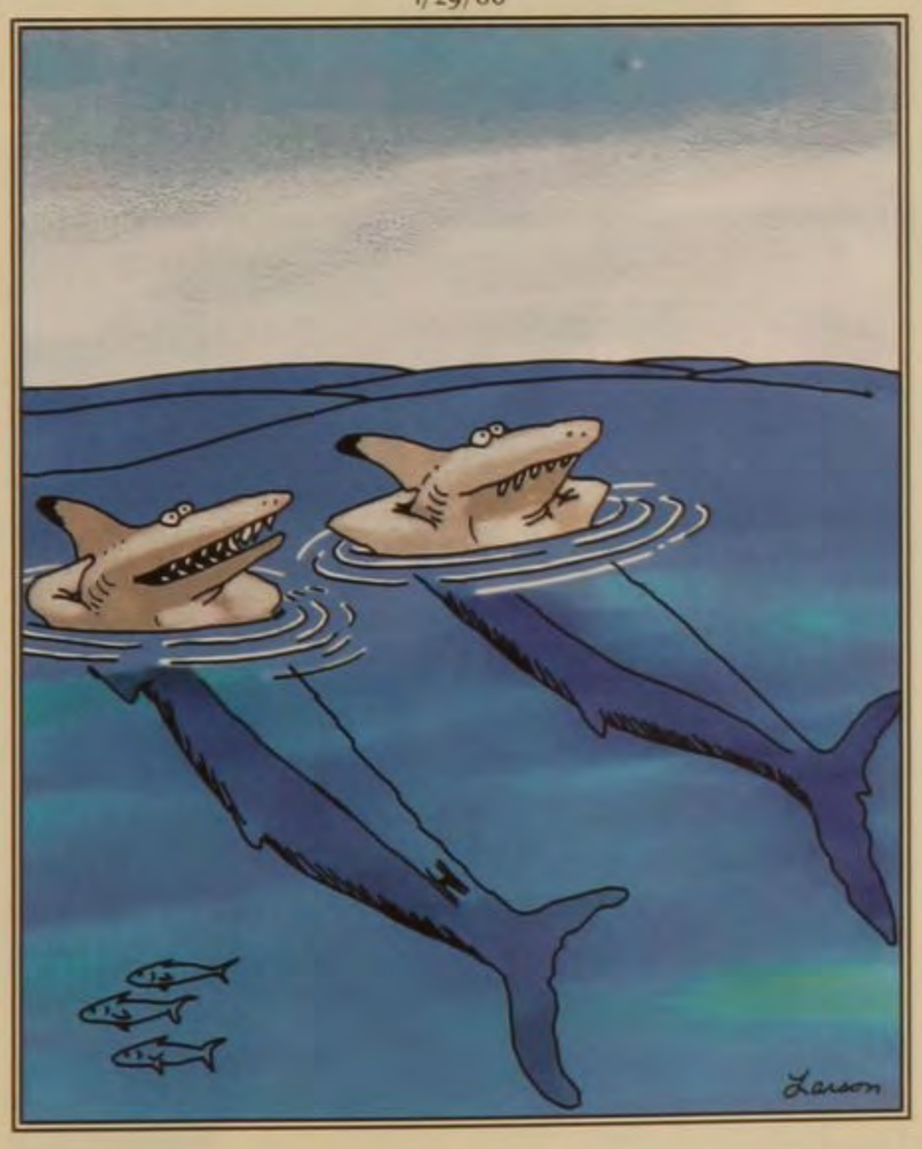
The 100-meter mosey

1/27/86

1/23/86

At the rubber man factory

1/29/86



"Gee, that's a wonderful sensation. ... Early in the morning, you just woke up, you're tired, movin' kinda slow, and then that ooooold smell hits your nose ... blood in the water."

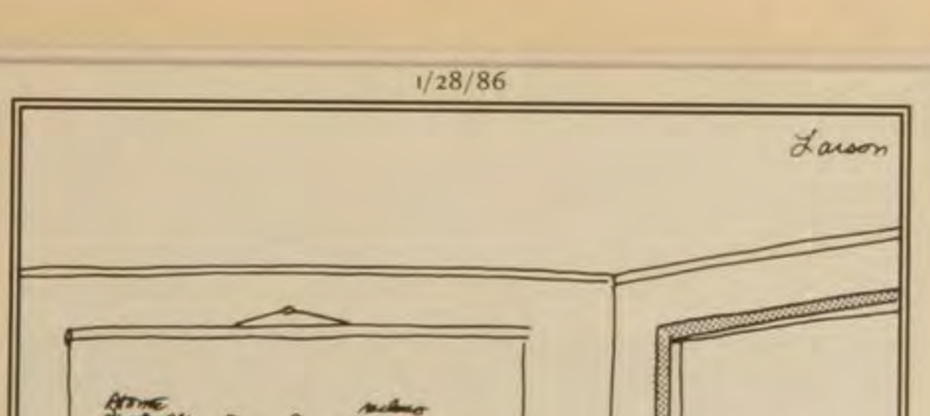
1/31/86

Primitive spelling bees

January 1986

"Look. Why don't you just give yourself up quietly? ... Otherwise, this thing could turn into a frenzy—and nobody wants that."

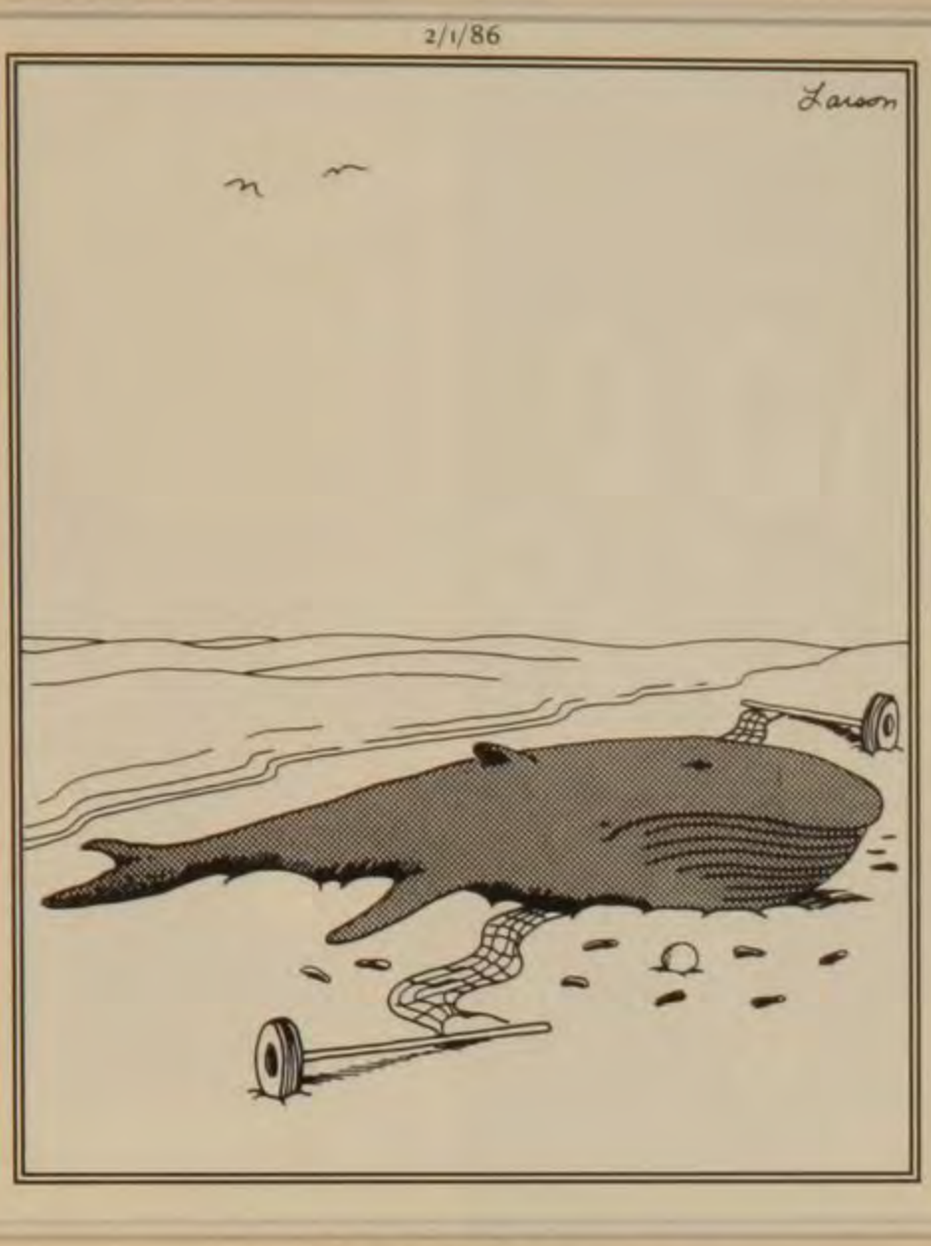
"Check this guy out, Lois. ... Artificial for sure."



Another case of too many scientists and not enough hunchbacks.

Edgar finds his purpose.

February 1986



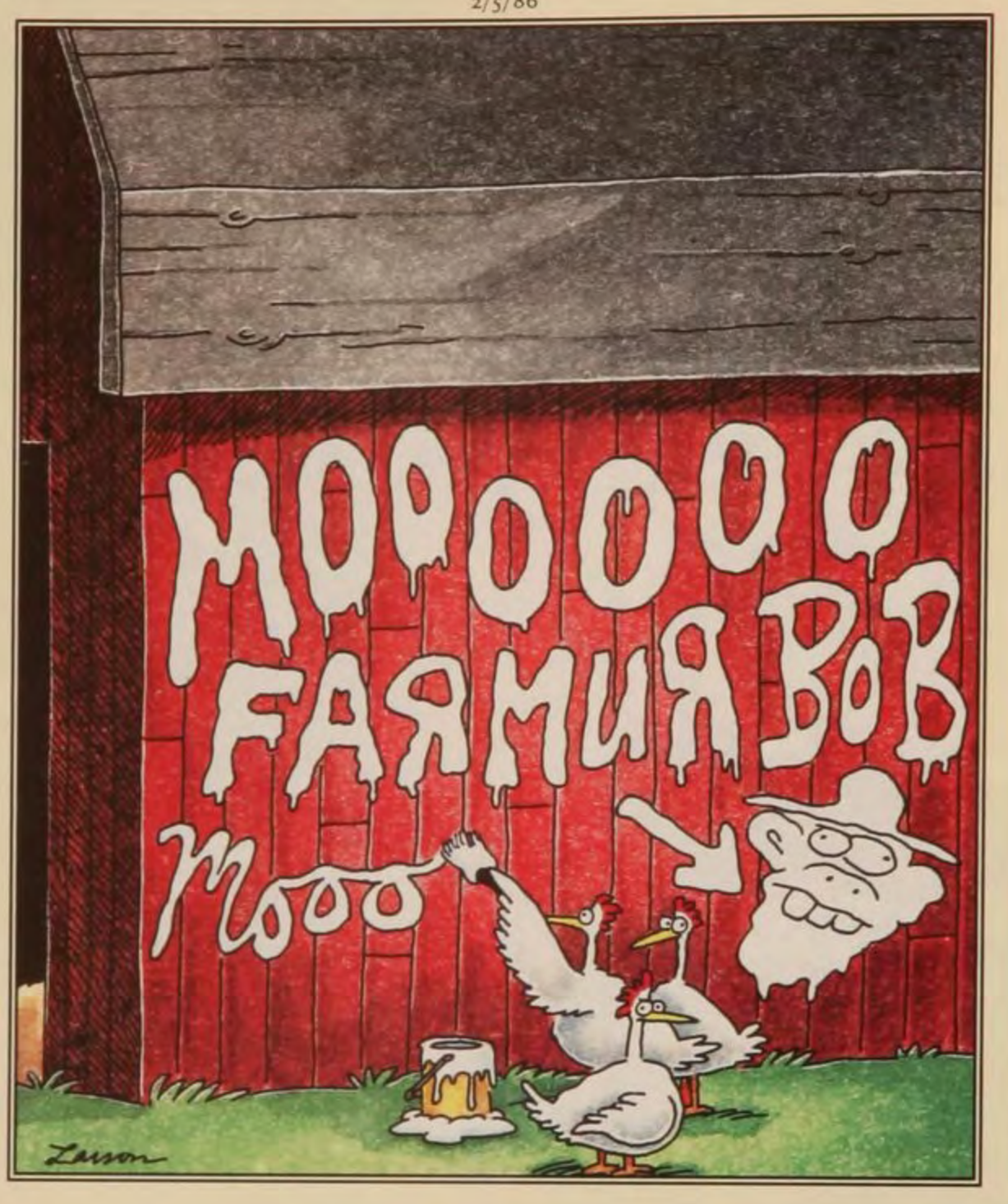
Beached whale surprise

"Once in a while couldn't we just have some pasta?"

"You know those teeny tiny little birds that walk around so trustingly inside a crocodile's mouth? Well, I just been eatin' those little guys like popcorn."

Saturday morning in the Garden

2/5/86



Eventually, the chickens were able to drive a wedge between Farmer Bob and Lulu.

2/6/86

"For crying out loud, Doris. ... You gotta drag that thing out *every* time we all get together?"

2/3/86

"Oo, Sylvia! You've got to see this! ... Ginger's bringing Bobby home, and even though her jaws can crush soup bones, Bobby only gets a few nicks and scratches."

February 1986

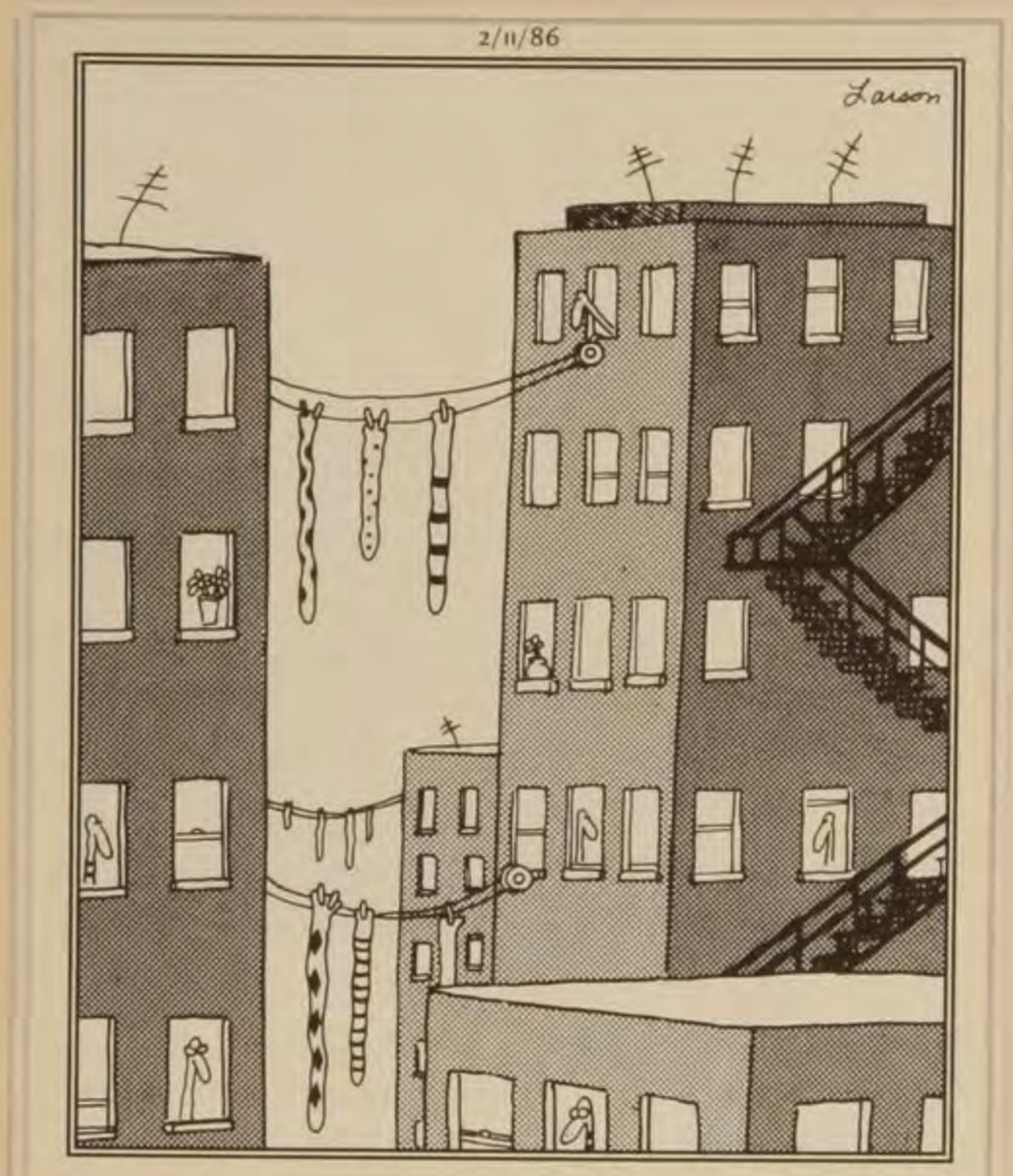
2/10/86

2/15/86

"Sure, I'll draw, mister—but first you gotta say the magic word. ... Didn't your mother ever teach you the magic word?"

2/12/86

Farmer Brown froze in his tracks; the cows stared wide-eyed back at him. Somewhere, off in the distance, a dog barked.



Across town in the snake district

"Mom! Theron's dried his bed again."

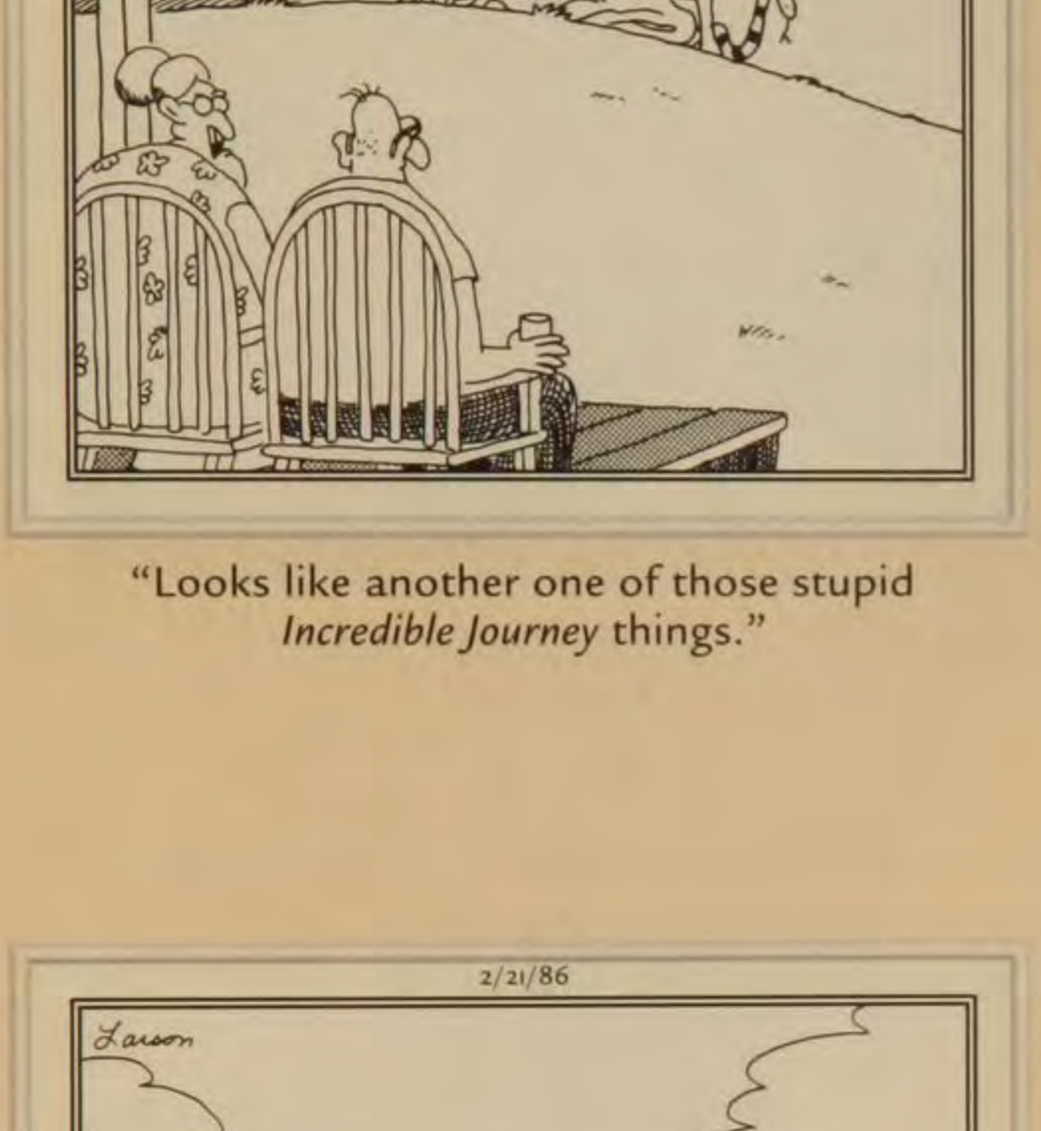
"Listen. You want to go extinct? You want them to shoot and trap us into oblivion? ... *We're* supposed to be the animals, so let's get back out there and act like it!"

"Louise! C'mon over here. ... I think we got some bug spreading through the store."

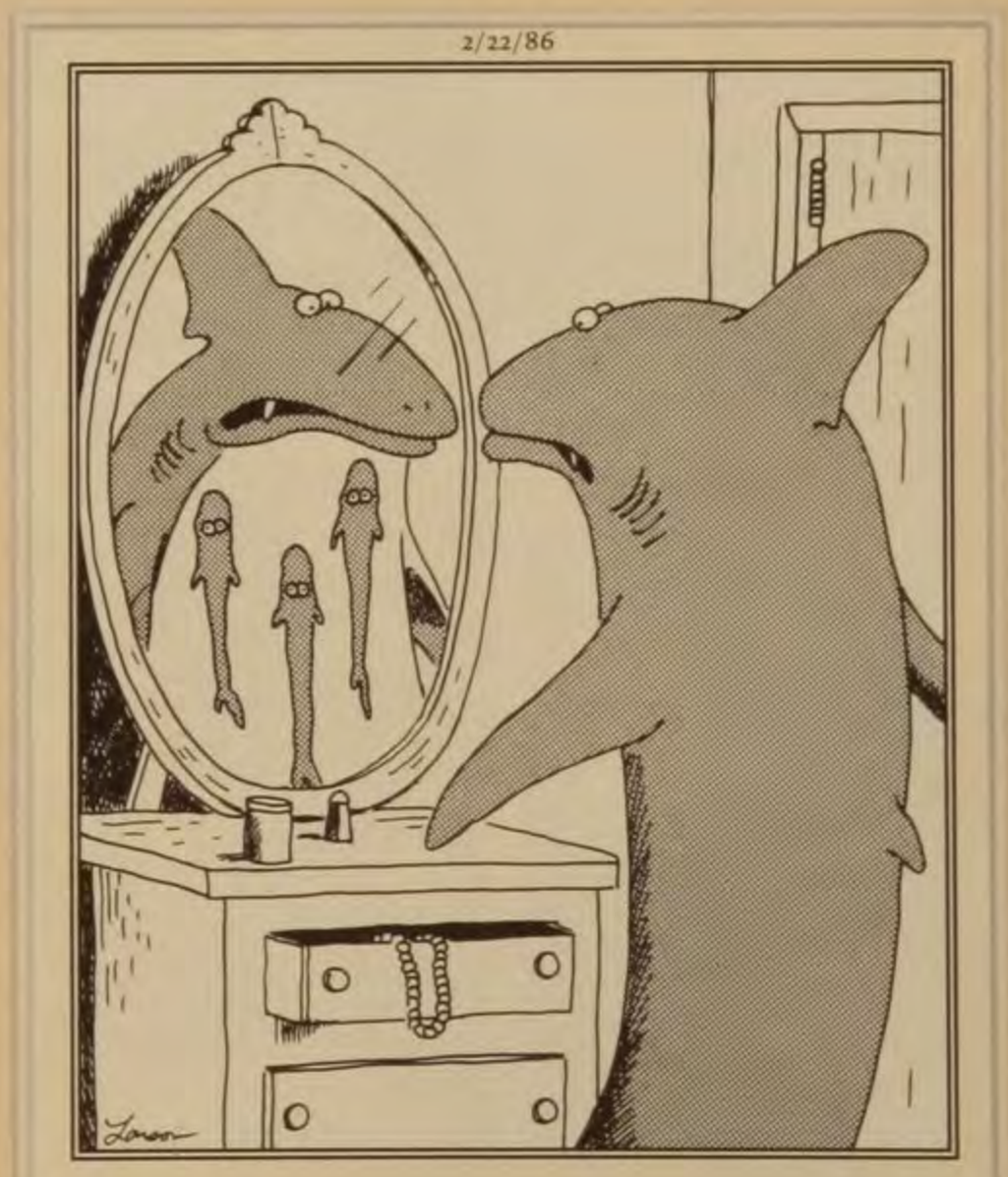
February 1986

"Looks like another one of those stupid *Incredible Journey* things."

"You know, Bjorg, there's something about holding a good, solid mace in your hand—you just look for an excuse to smash something."



The invaluable lizard setter



The heartbreak of remoras

February 1986

In God's den

Cattle hustler

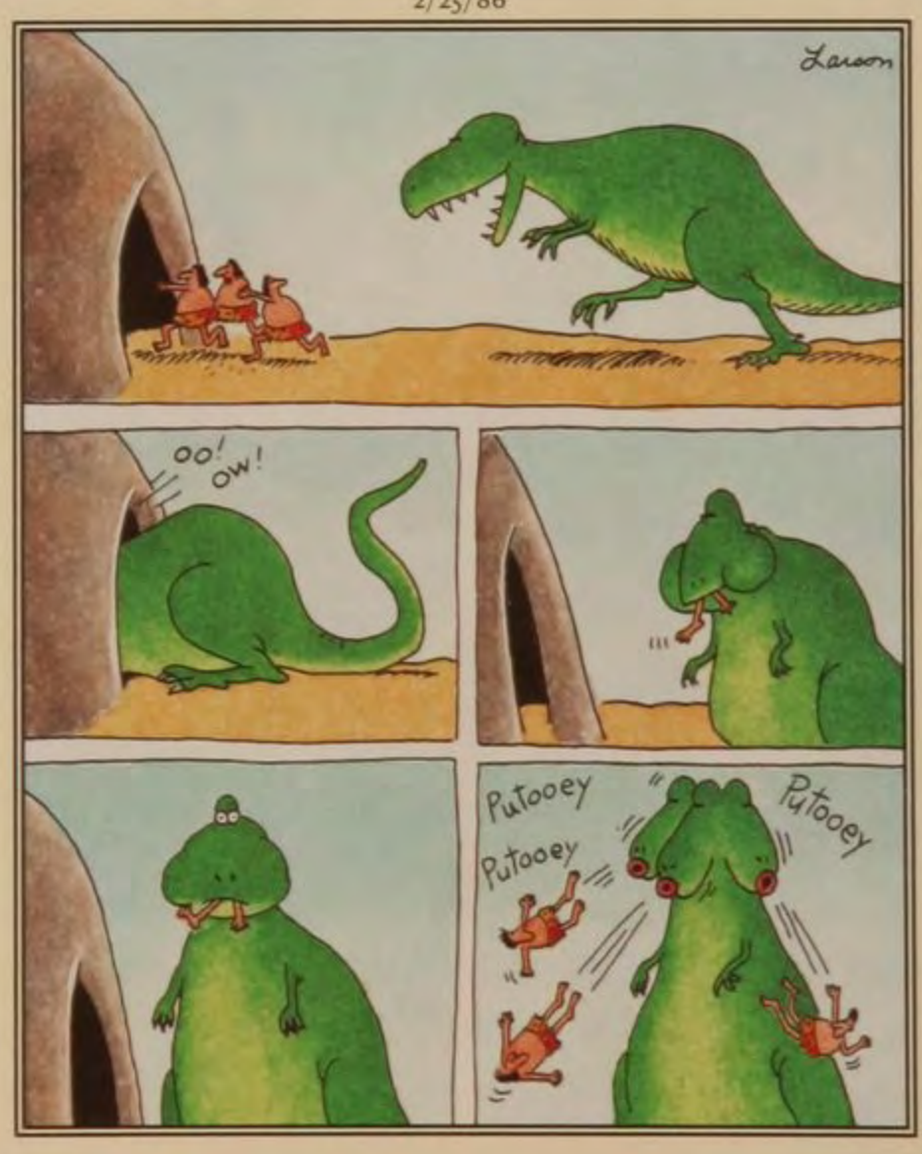
"You're gonna be okay, mister, but I can't say the same for your little buddy over there. ... The way I hear it, he's the one that mouthed off to them gunfighters in the first place."

2/26/86

2/24/86

Testing the carnivore-proof vest.

2/25/86



In the days before soap

March 1986

3/1/86

3/3/86

Single-cell sitcoms

3/4/86

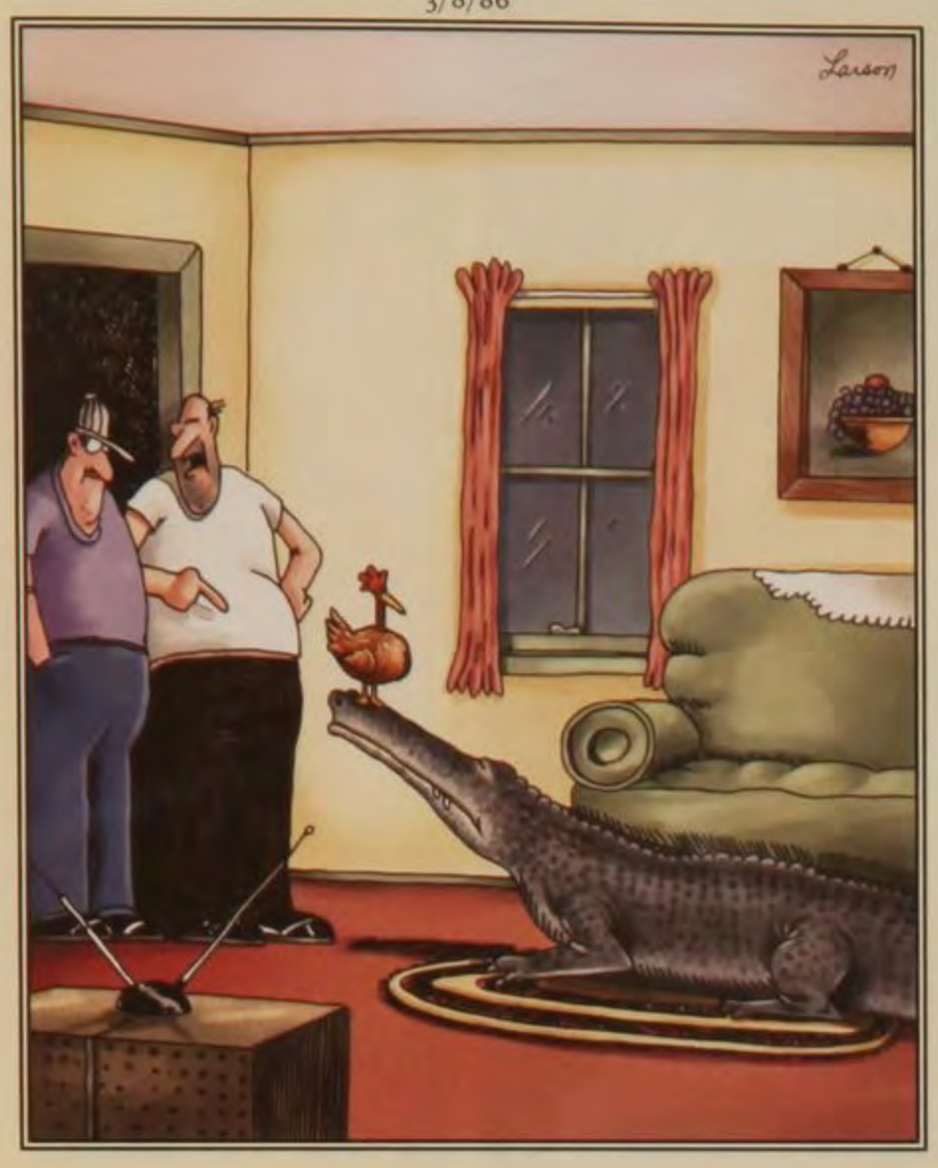
"Mom! Allen's makin' his milk foam!"

3/5/86

"Sorry ... we're dead."

March 1986

3/8/86



"Now watch this. He'll keep that chicken right there until I say okay. ... You wanna say okay, Ernie?"

3/6/86

Clumsy ghosts

3/10/86

Canine social blunders

3/12/86

Clowns of the animal world

March 1986

3/13/86

"Hors d'oeuvre?"

3/7/86

"Mr. Ainsworth. ... Calling Mr. Aiiiinsworth. ... If you're within the sound of my voice, Mr. Ainsworth, please give us some kind of sign."

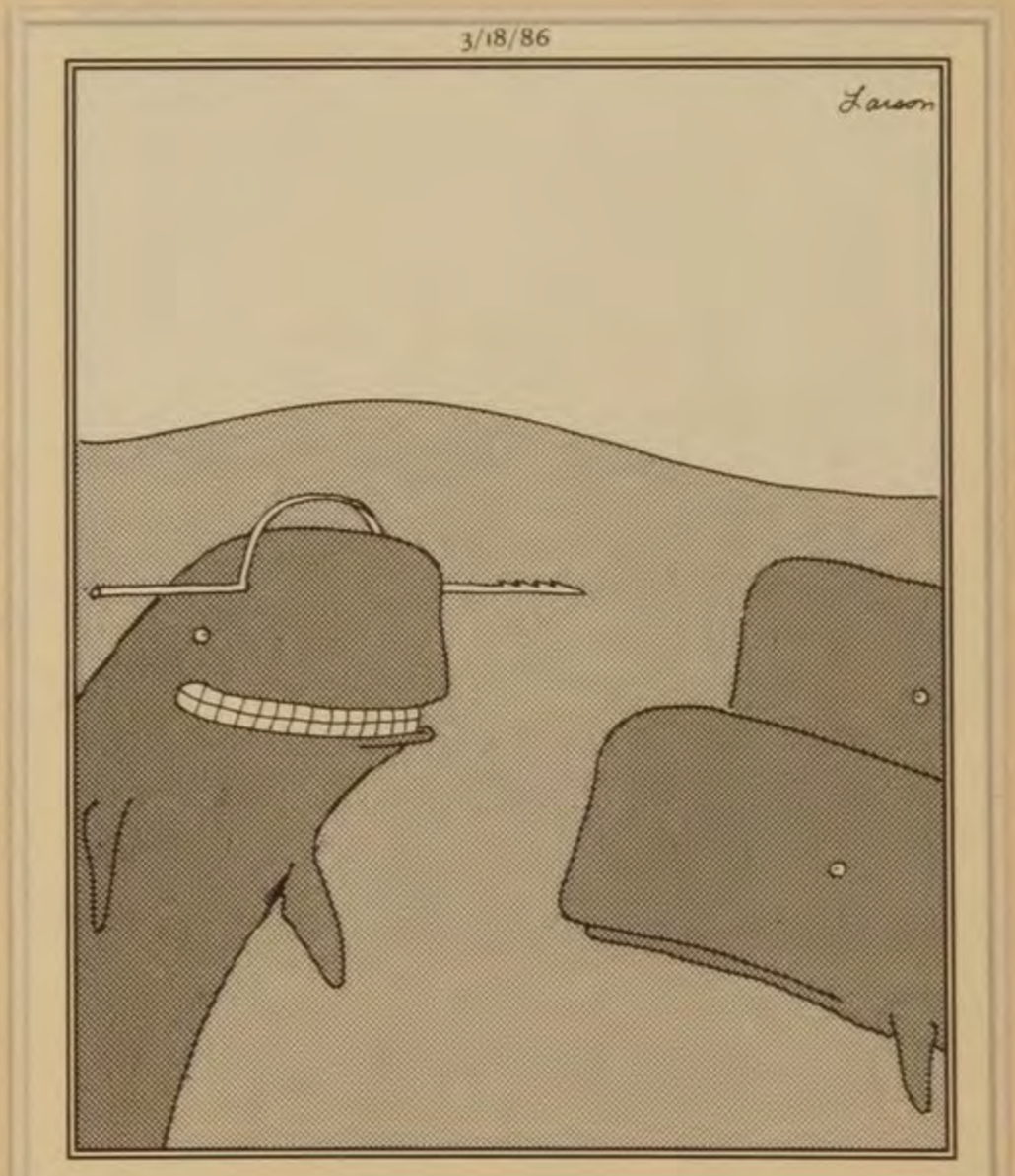
3/11/86

Early comedians

March 1986

"Randy's goin' down!"

Forest violence



The old "fake harpoon" gag

March 1986

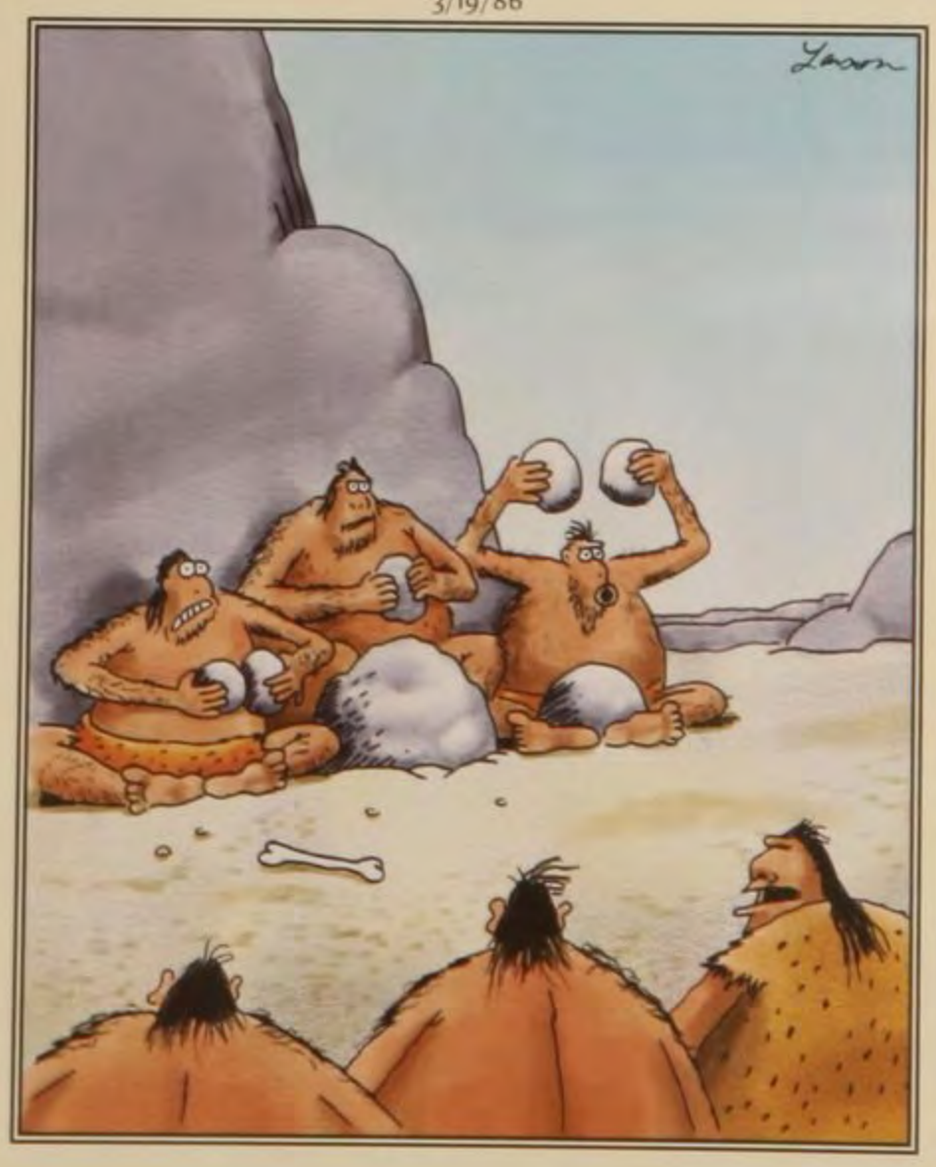
3/15/86

When snakes try to chew gum and crawl at the same time.

3/17/86

"Mr. Bailey? There's a gentleman here who claims an ancestor of yours once defiled his crypt, and now you're the last remaining Bailey and ... oh, something about a curse. Should I send him in?"

3/19/86



"Grog. ... They play our song."

3/24/86

March 1986

3/22/86

"Well, I'm not sure. ... You don't carry any other styles?"

3/25/86

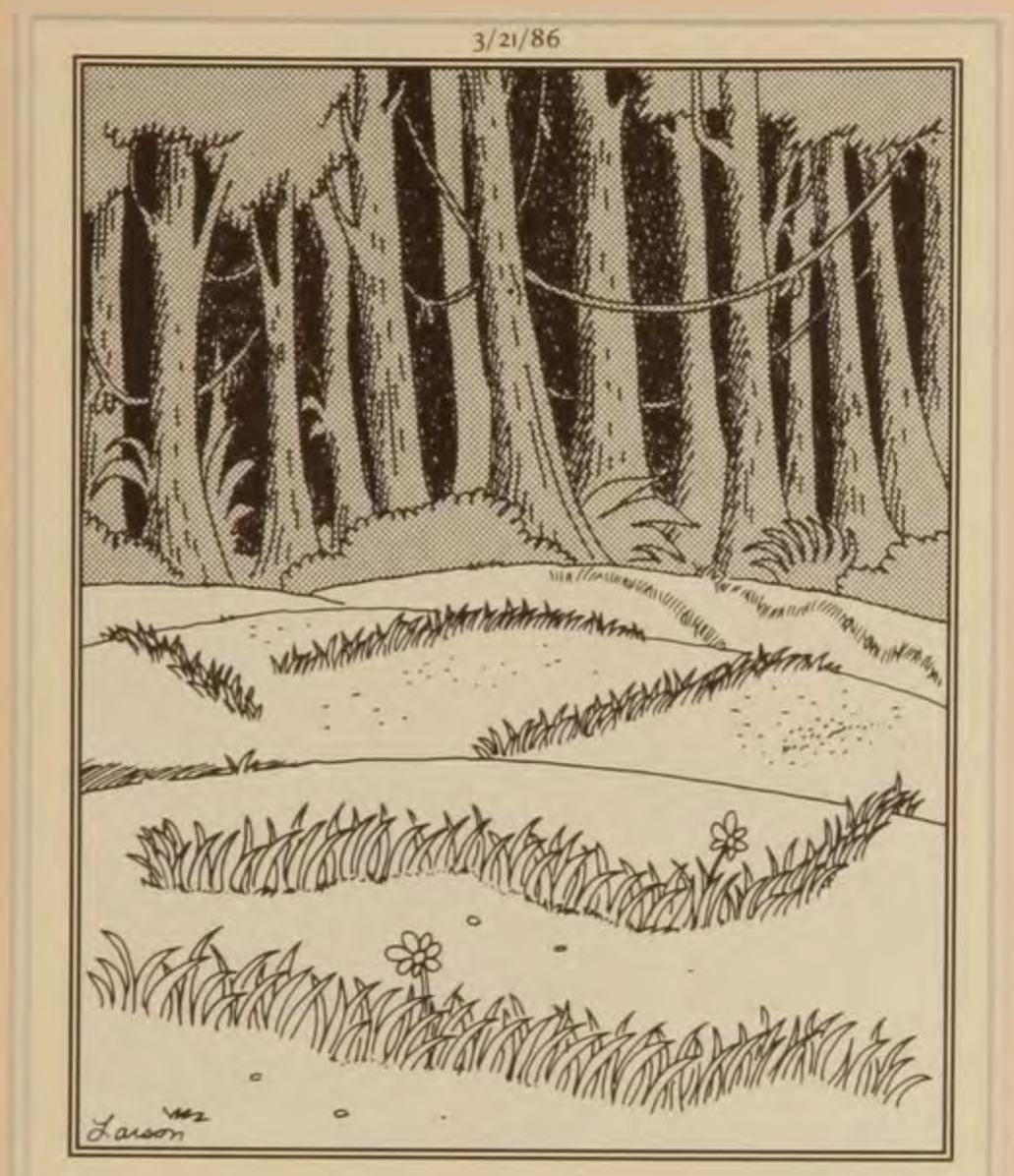
3/26/86

"Okay, guys, let's move in on those three heifers in the corner. ... Bob, you take the 'Triple R,' Dale, you take the 'Circle L,' and I'll take the 'Lazy Q.'"

3/27/86

"Eddie! I've told you a hundred times never to run with that through the house!"

March 1986



The secret python burial grounds

Custer's last view

The livestock would gather every morning, hoping for one of Farmer Dan's popular "airplane" rides.

"Hold it right there, Doreen! ... Leave if you must—but the dog *stays!*"

April 1986

Cartoon teenagers

Interplanetary luggage mix-ups

"Oh, lovely—just the hundredth time you've managed to cut everyone's head off."

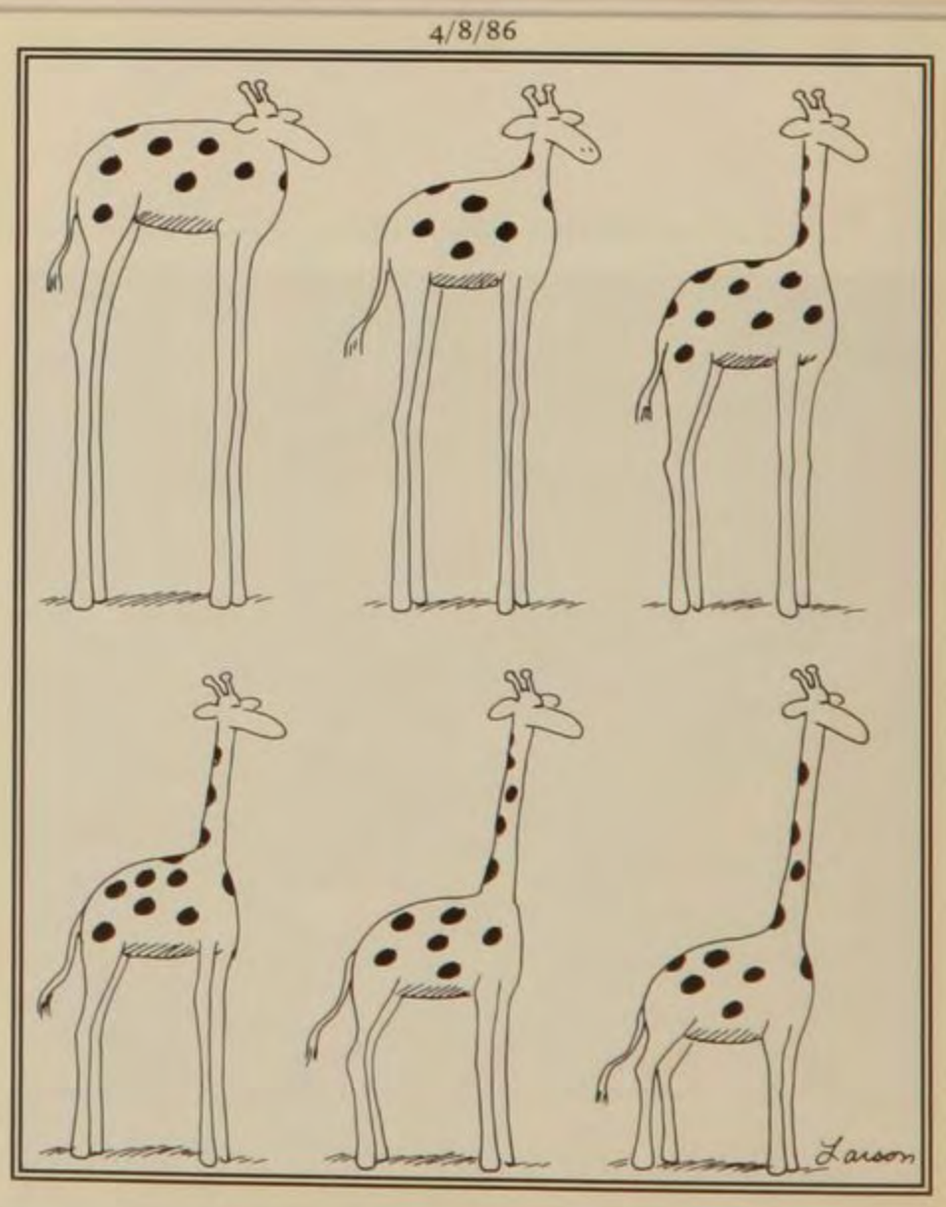
"Hey, Bob wants in—does anyone know how to work this thing?"

4/4/86

4/5/86

Rock Shop 101

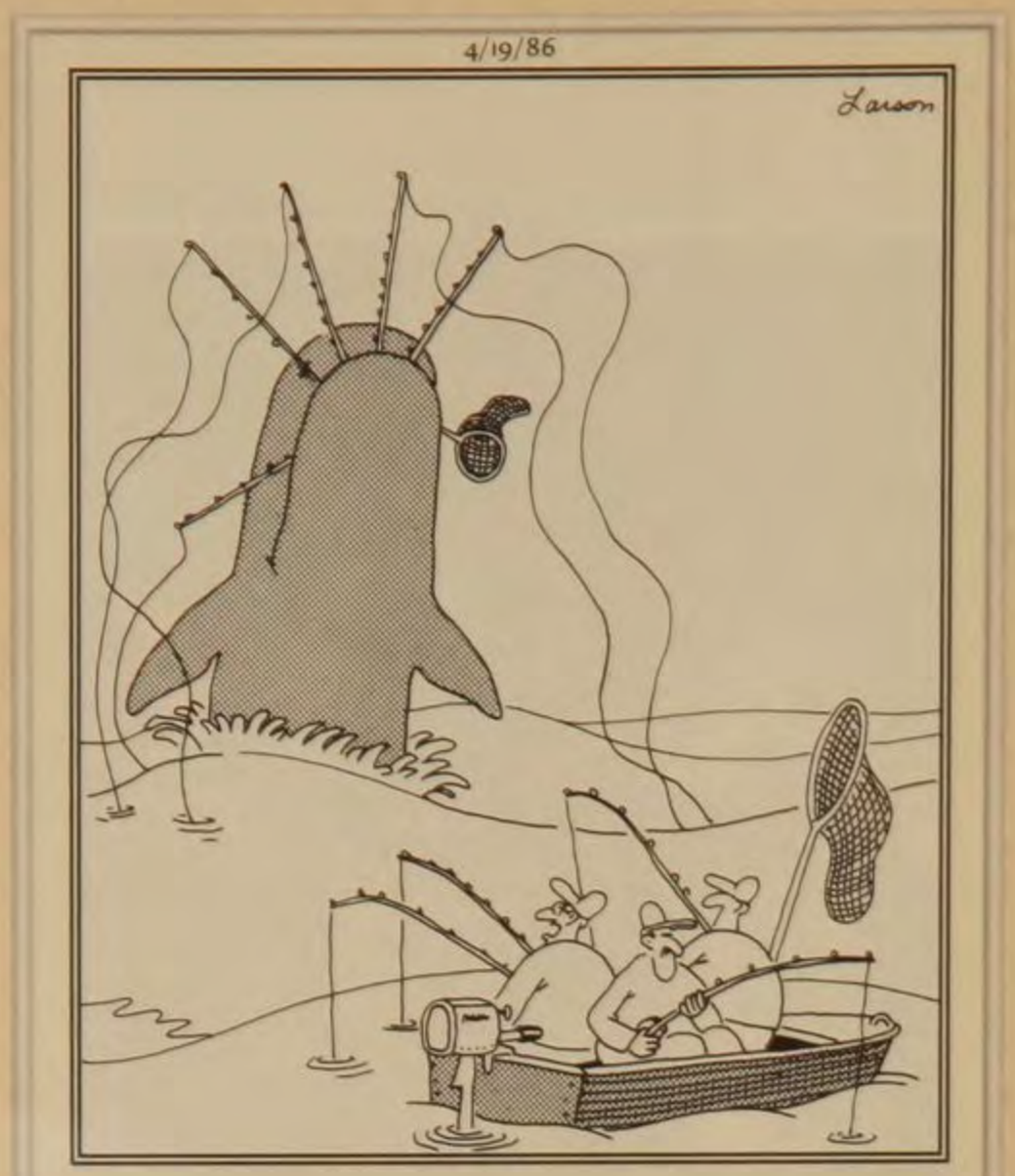
4/8/86



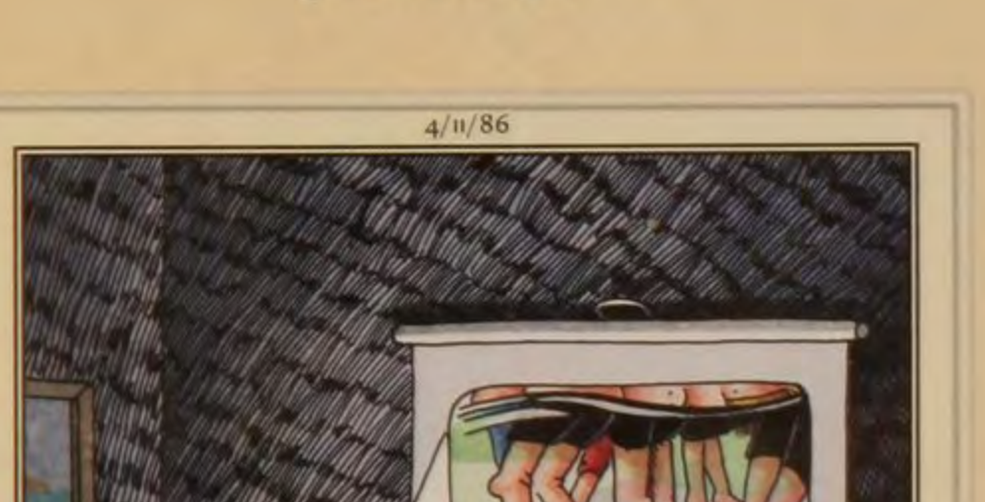
Giraffe evolution

April 1986

"Uh-oh—did anyone remember to feed the giraffe tonight?"



"Oooooooweeeee! ... I wonder what they were using."



"And here we are last summer off the coast of ... Helen, is this Hawaii or Florida?"

"Margaret! He's doing it! He's doing it!"

April 1986

4/12/86

"Okay, let's take a look at you."

4/14/86

"In the wild, of course, they'd be natural enemies—but they do just fine together if you get 'em as pups."

4/15/86

"Buffalo breath? *Buffalo* breath? ... Shall we discuss your incessant little *grunting* noises?"

4/16/86

"Well, one guess which table wants another round of banana daiquiris."

April 1986

"Dang, that gives me the creeps. ... I wish she'd hurry up and scoop that guy out."

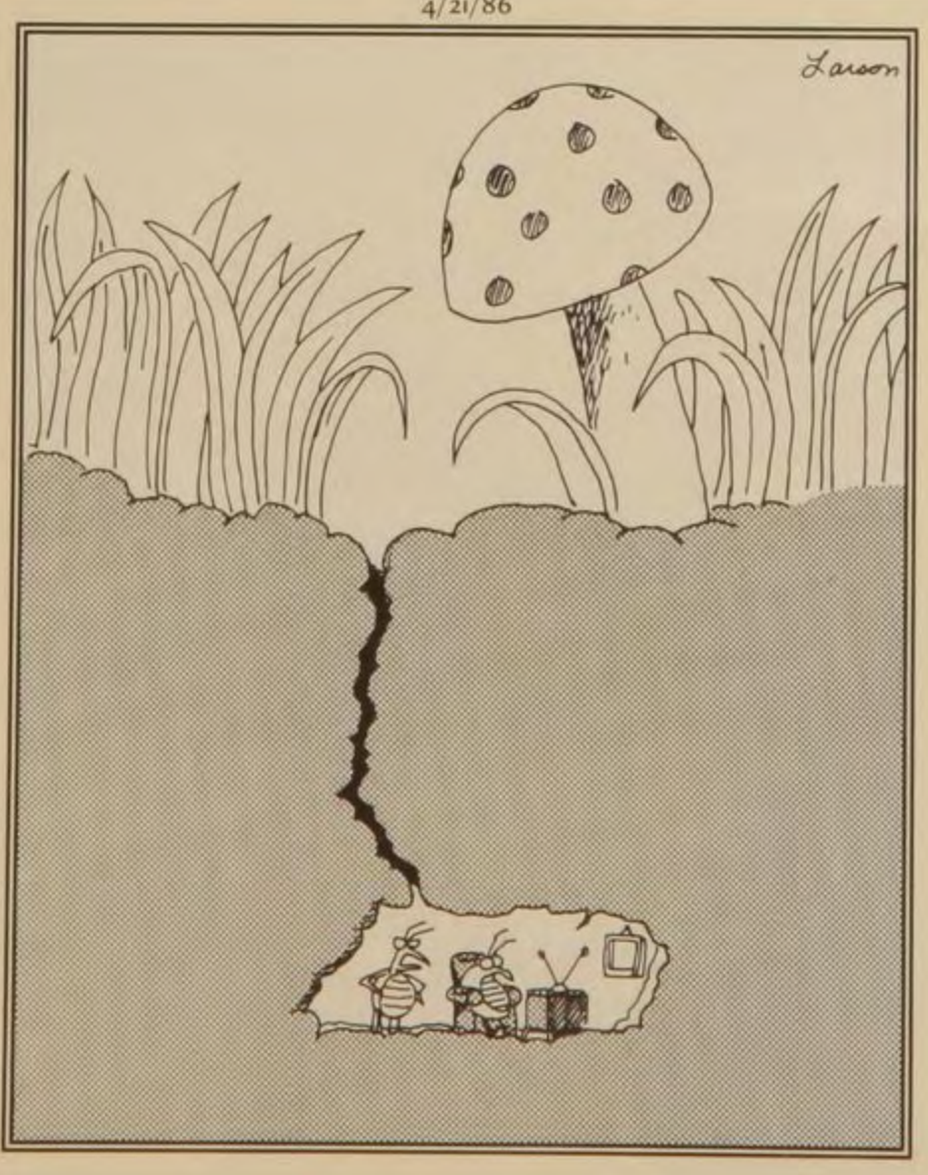
Elephant campfires

Neither rain nor snow nor sleet nor hail, they said, could stop the mail. ... But they didn't figure on Rexbo.

Headhunter hall closets

April 1986

"Oh, and here's Luanne now. ... Bobby just got sheared today, Luanne."



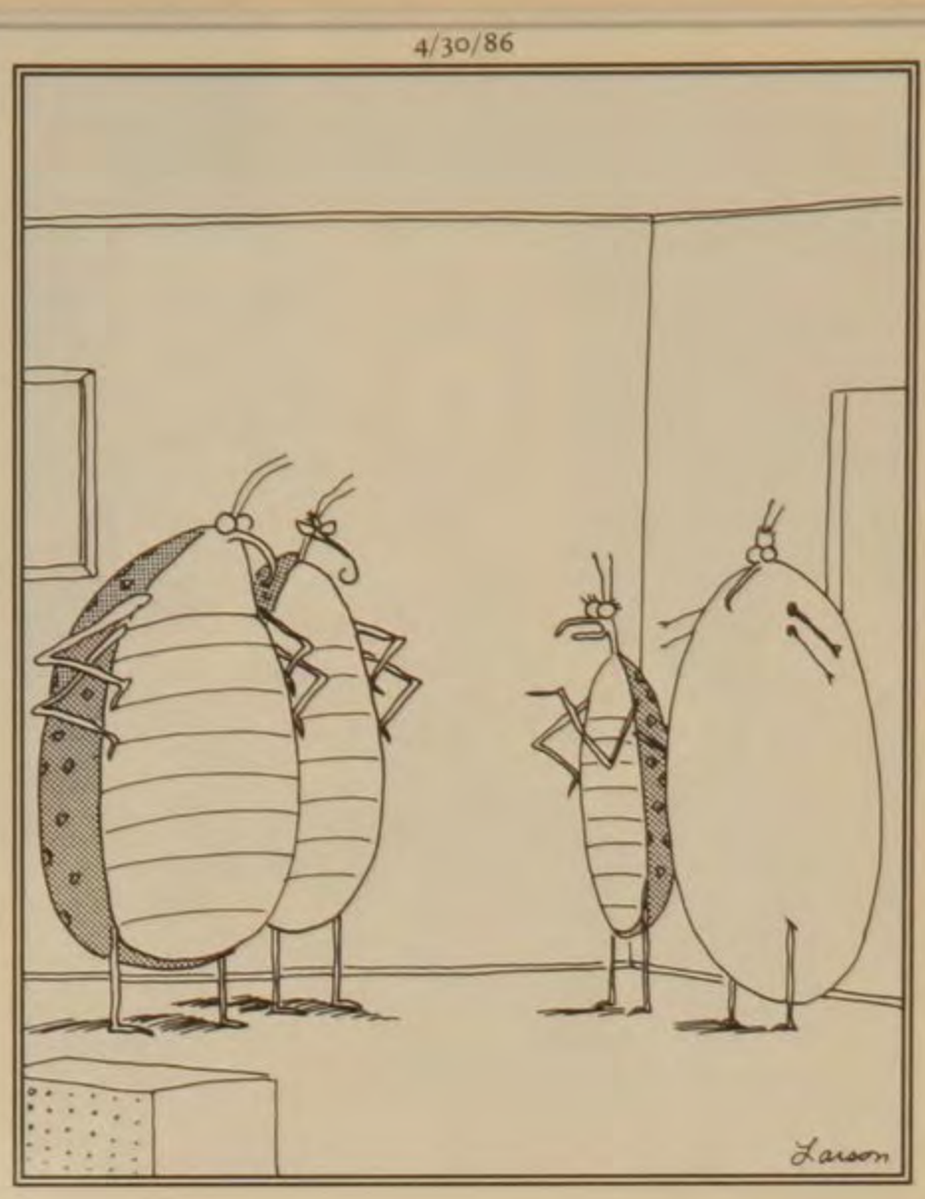
"You call this a niche?"

April 1986

4/25/86

The Kongs at home

4/30/86



"Listen. We may be young, but we're in love and we're getting married—I'll just work until Jerry pupates."

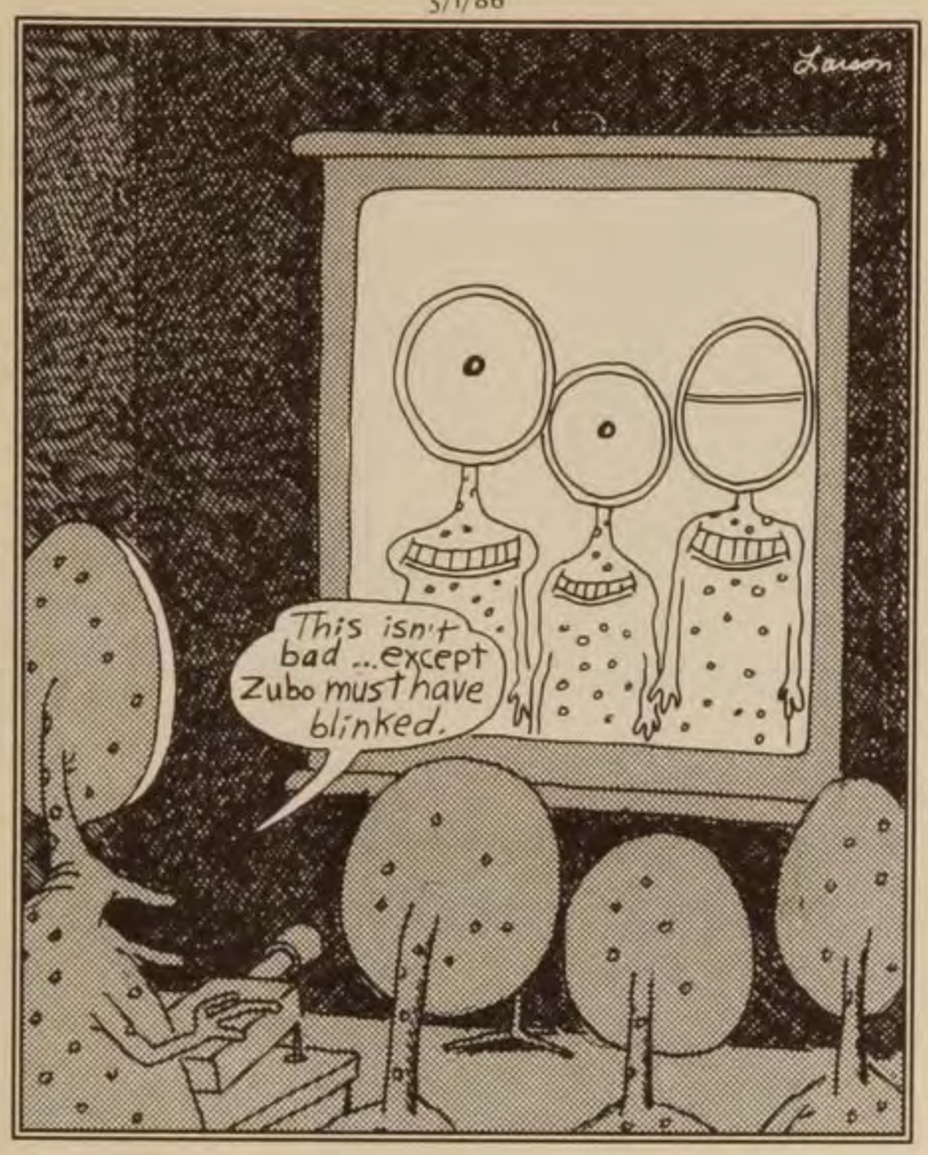
4/28/86

"Okay, sir, would you like inferno or non-inferno? ... Ha! Just kidding. It's all inferno, of course—I just get a kick out of saying that."

4/29/86

"NOW!"

May 1986



Alien slide-shows

Insectosaurs

"Donald ... trade you a thorax and six legs for two of your body segments."

"Now, here's a feature you folks would really enjoy. ... Voilà! A tree right off the master bedroom!"

May 1986

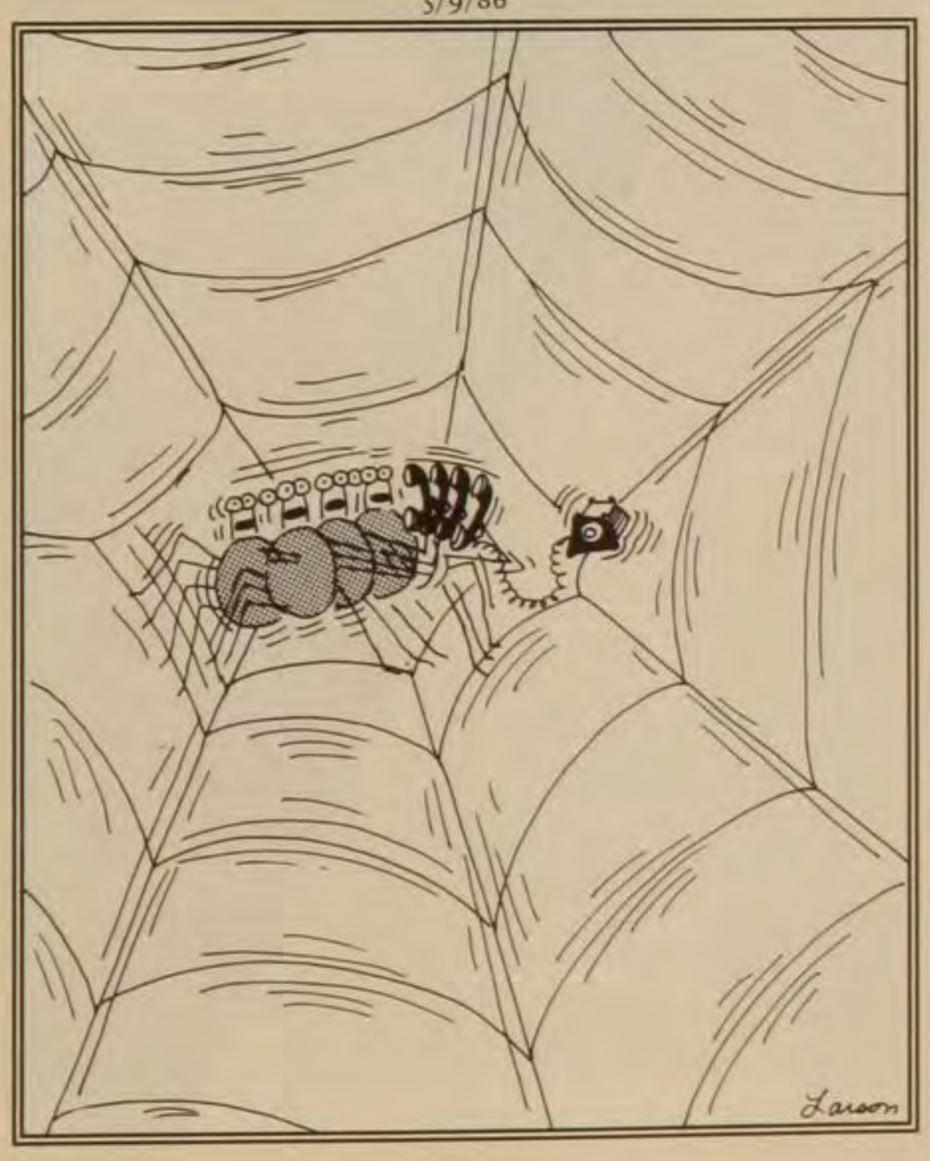
5/6/86

Parents of a lazy river

5/8/86

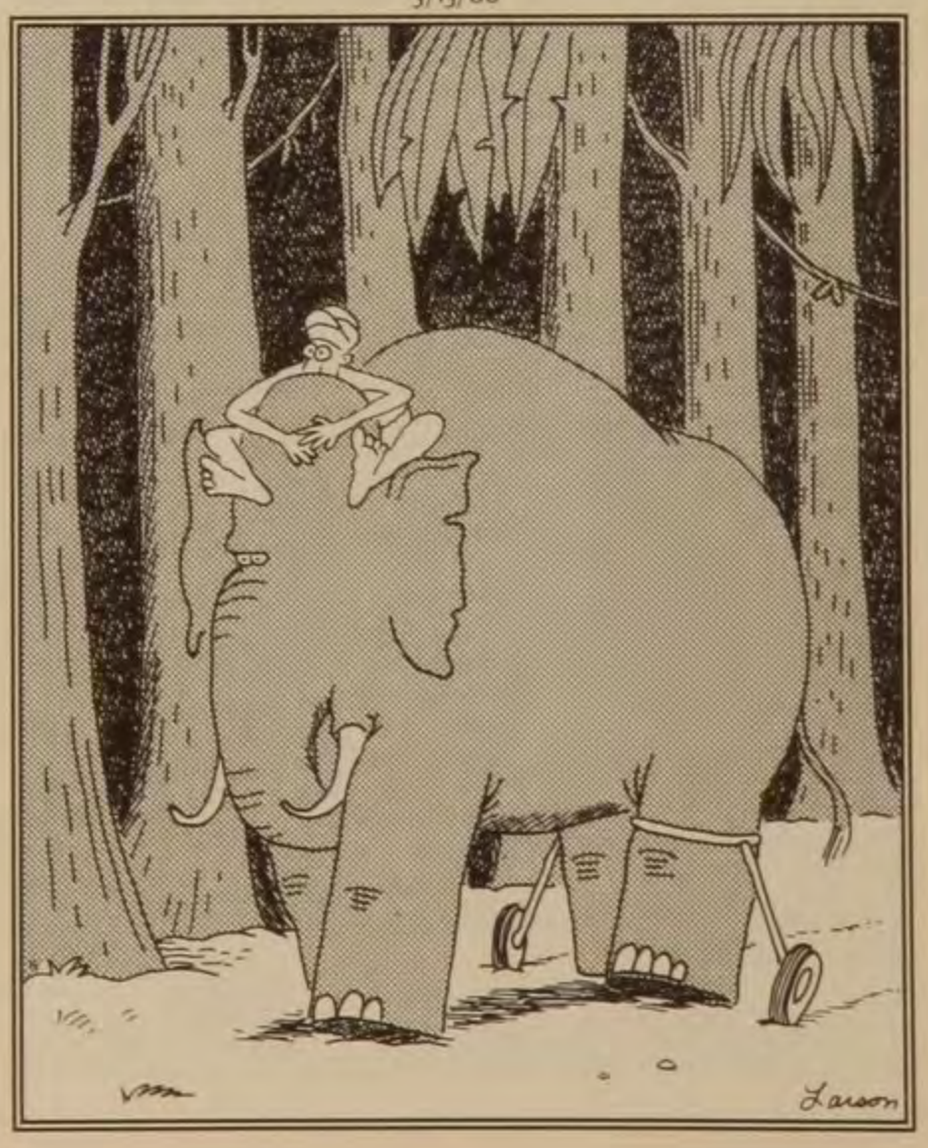
Back-hump drivers

5/9/86



"Whoa! Gotta go, Karen. ... Think I've caught somethin' pretty big."

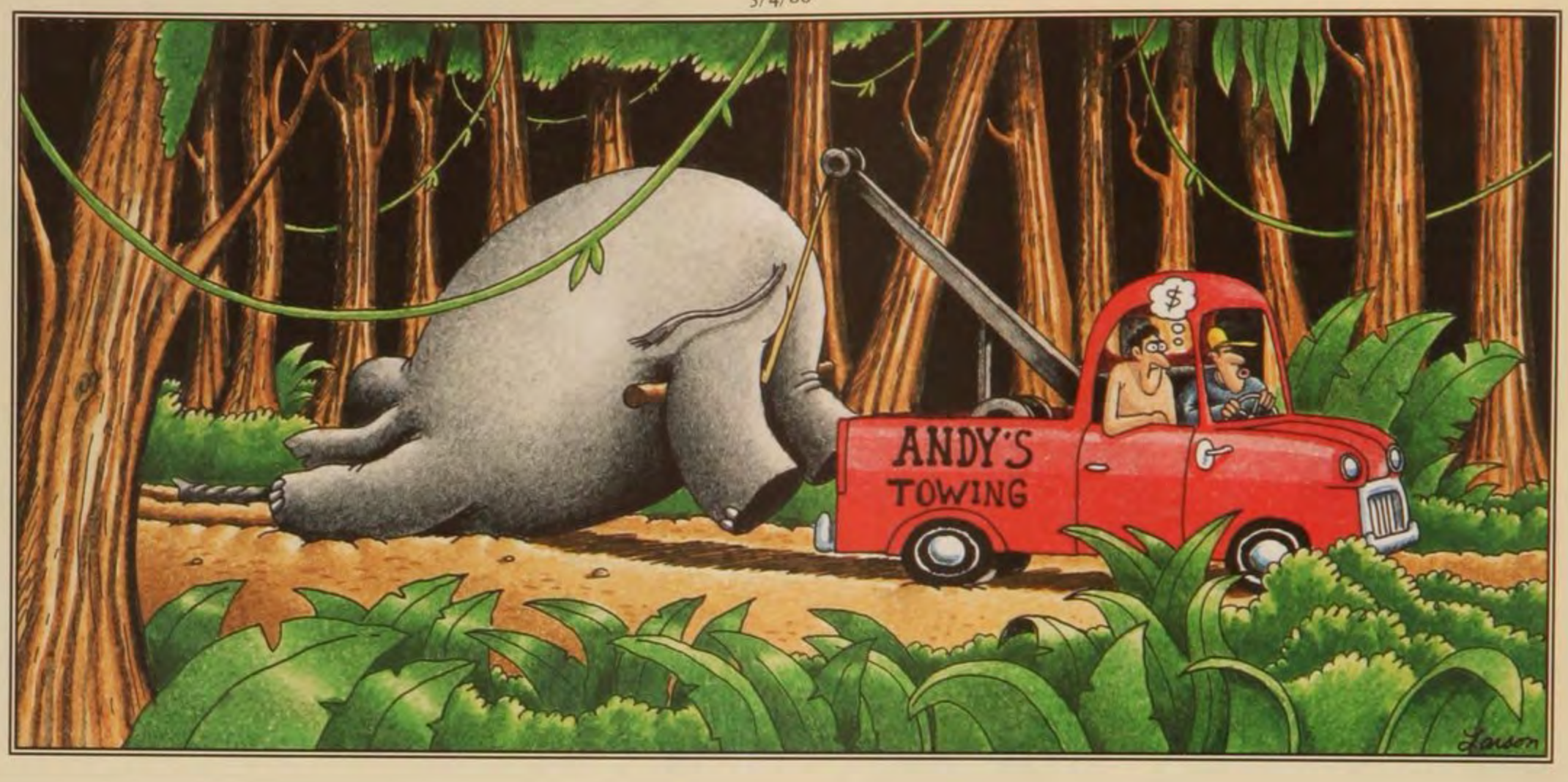
5/13/86



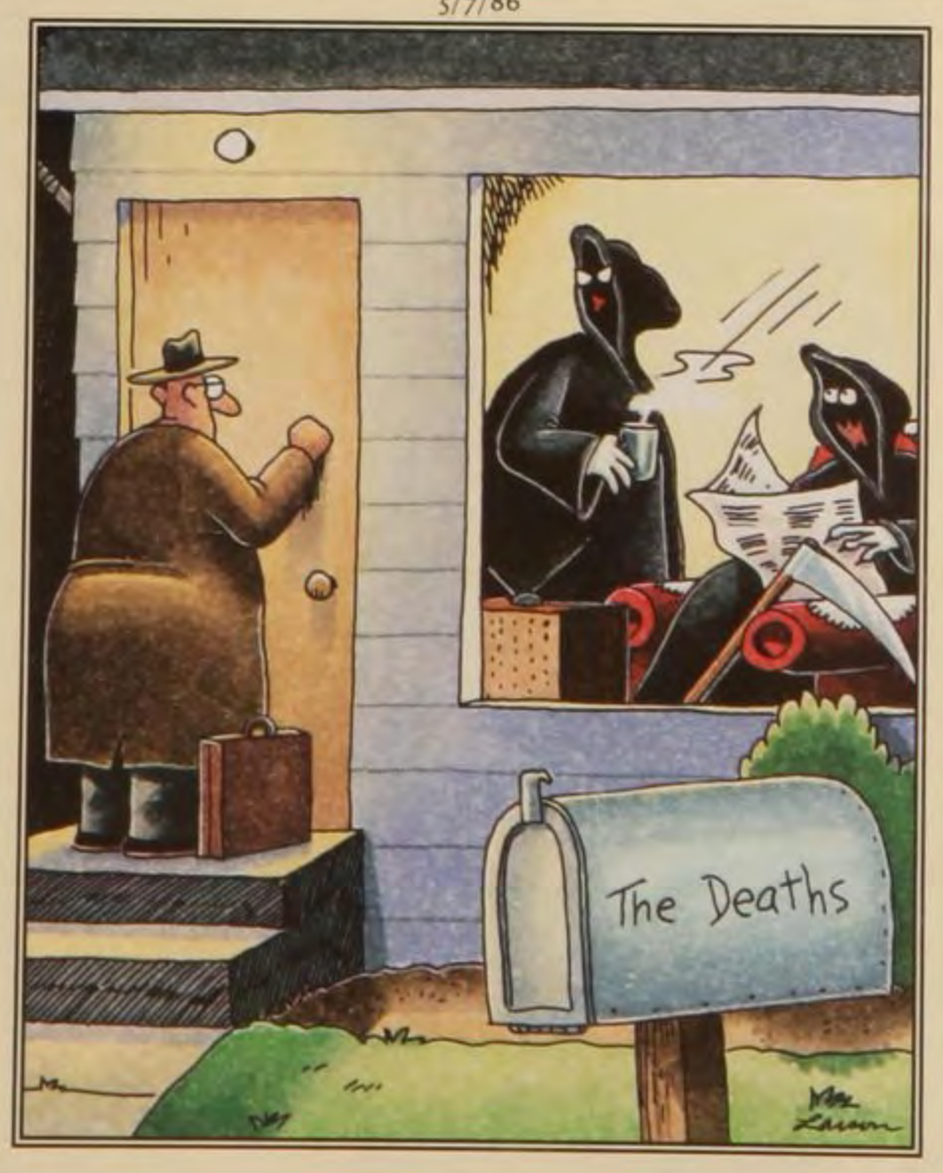
Mahout training wheels

May 1986

5/4/86



5/7/86



"Dang, if it doesn't happen every time! ... We just sit down to relax and someone's knockin' at the door."

5/10/86

May 1986

5/12/86

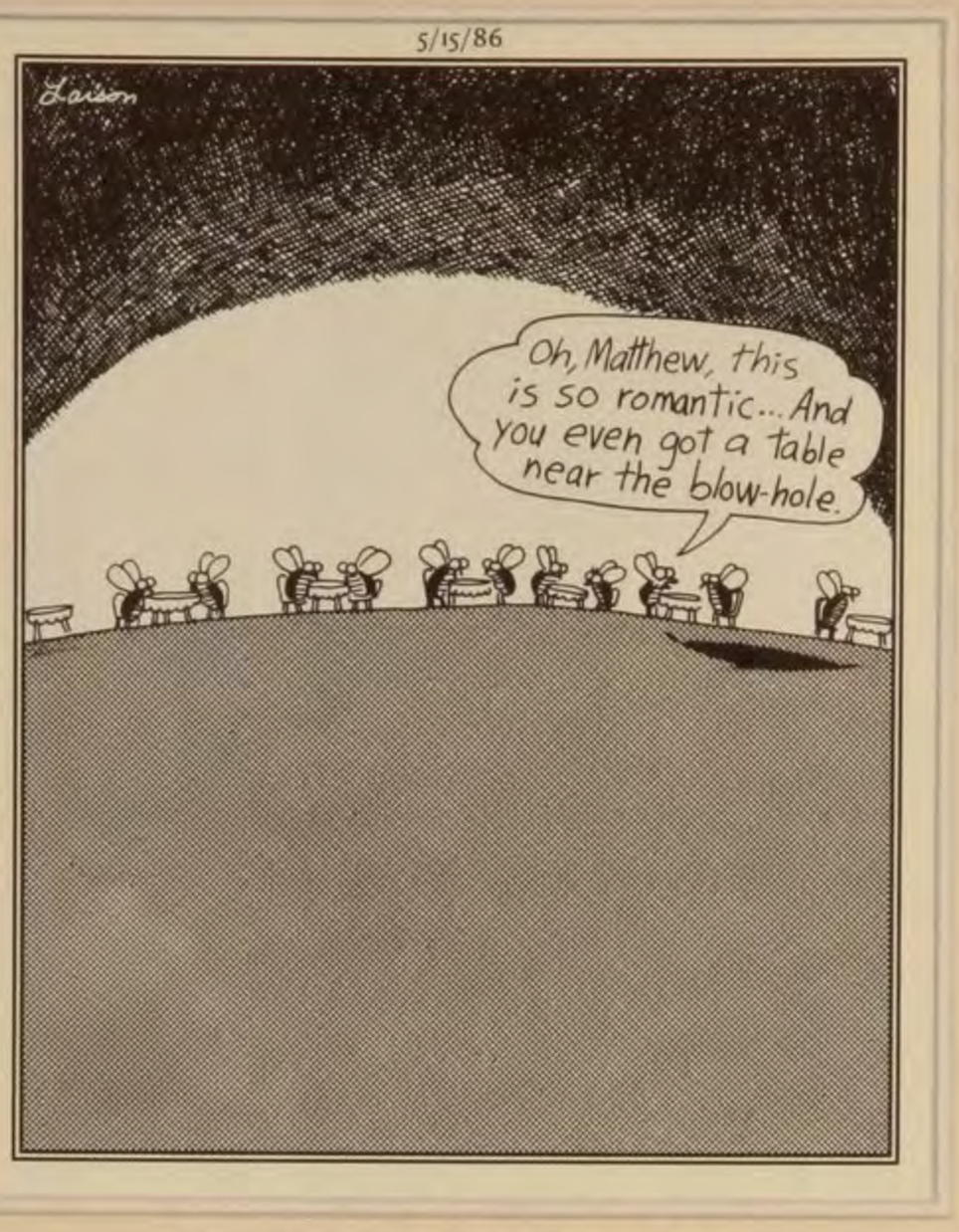
Group photo disasters

5/14/86

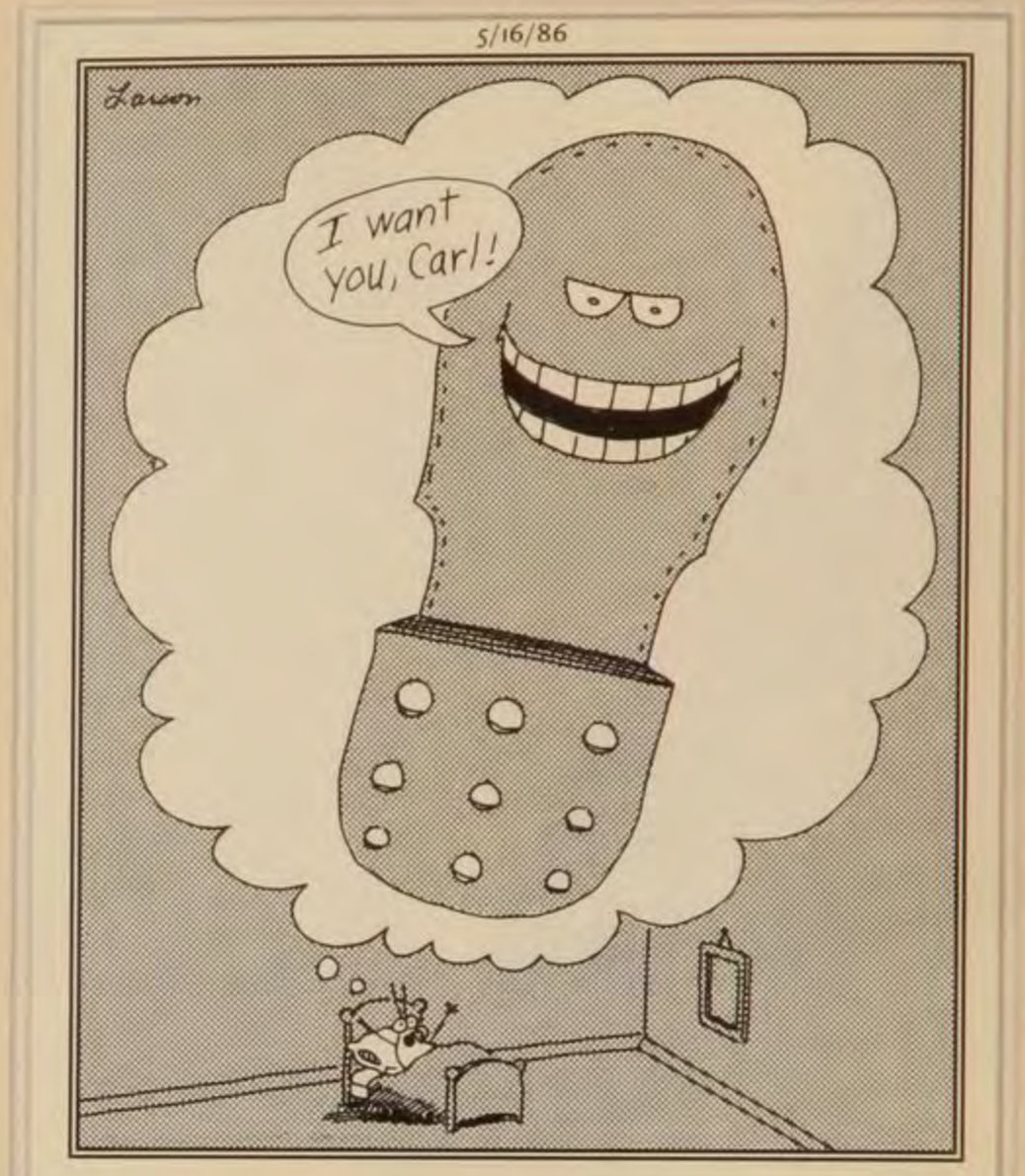
"Okay, let's see ... that's a curse on you, a curse on you, and a curse on you."

5/11/86

May 1986



Evening on a beached whale



Cockroach nightmares

Primitive mobsters

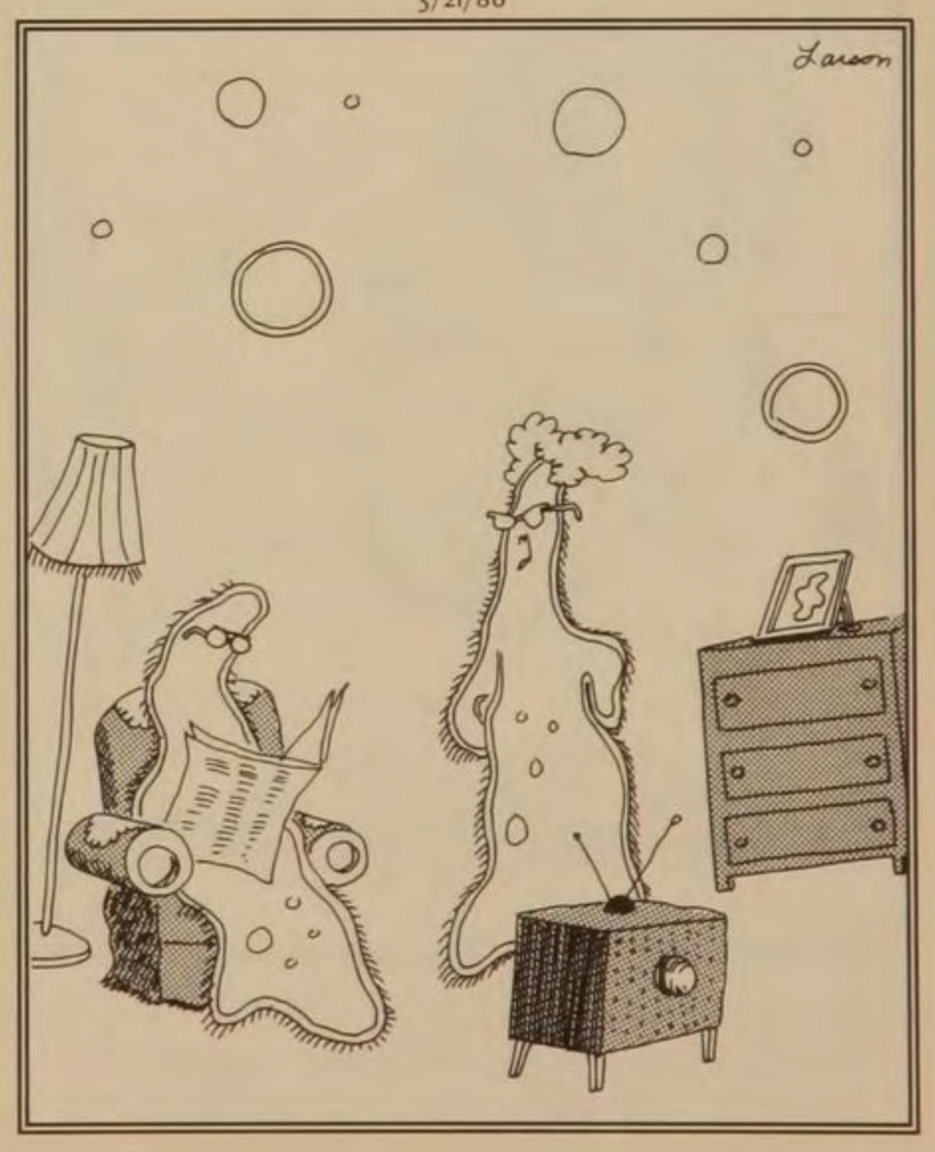
"Nik! The fireflies across the street—I think they're mooning us!"

5/18/86

5/19/86

The Grim Reaper as a child

5/21/86



"I'm *talking* to you! ... You're so ... so ... so thick-membraned sometimes."

May 1986

5/20/86

Cow joyrides

5/23/86

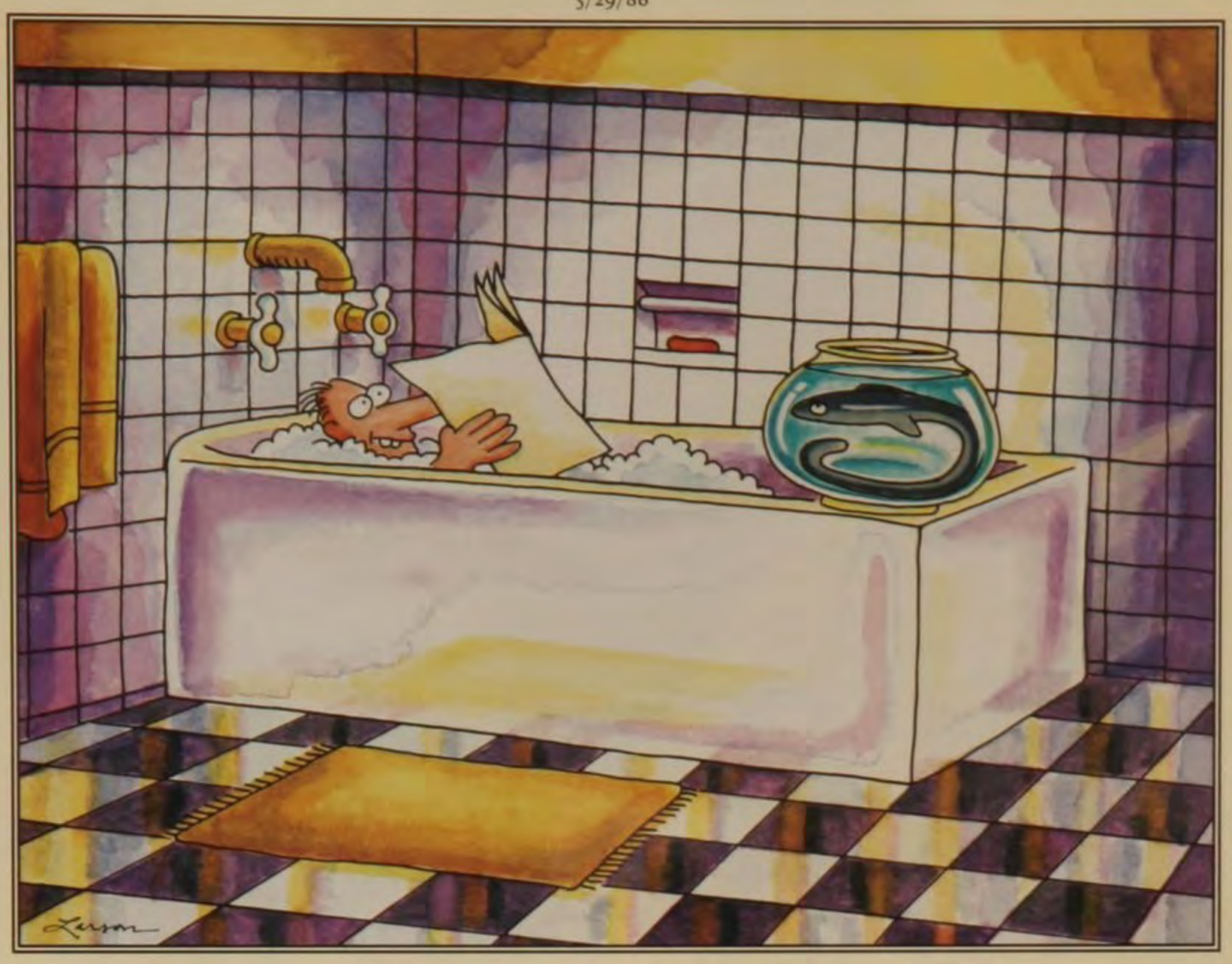
5/24/86

Braving the Indian "pillow" gauntlet.

5/27/86

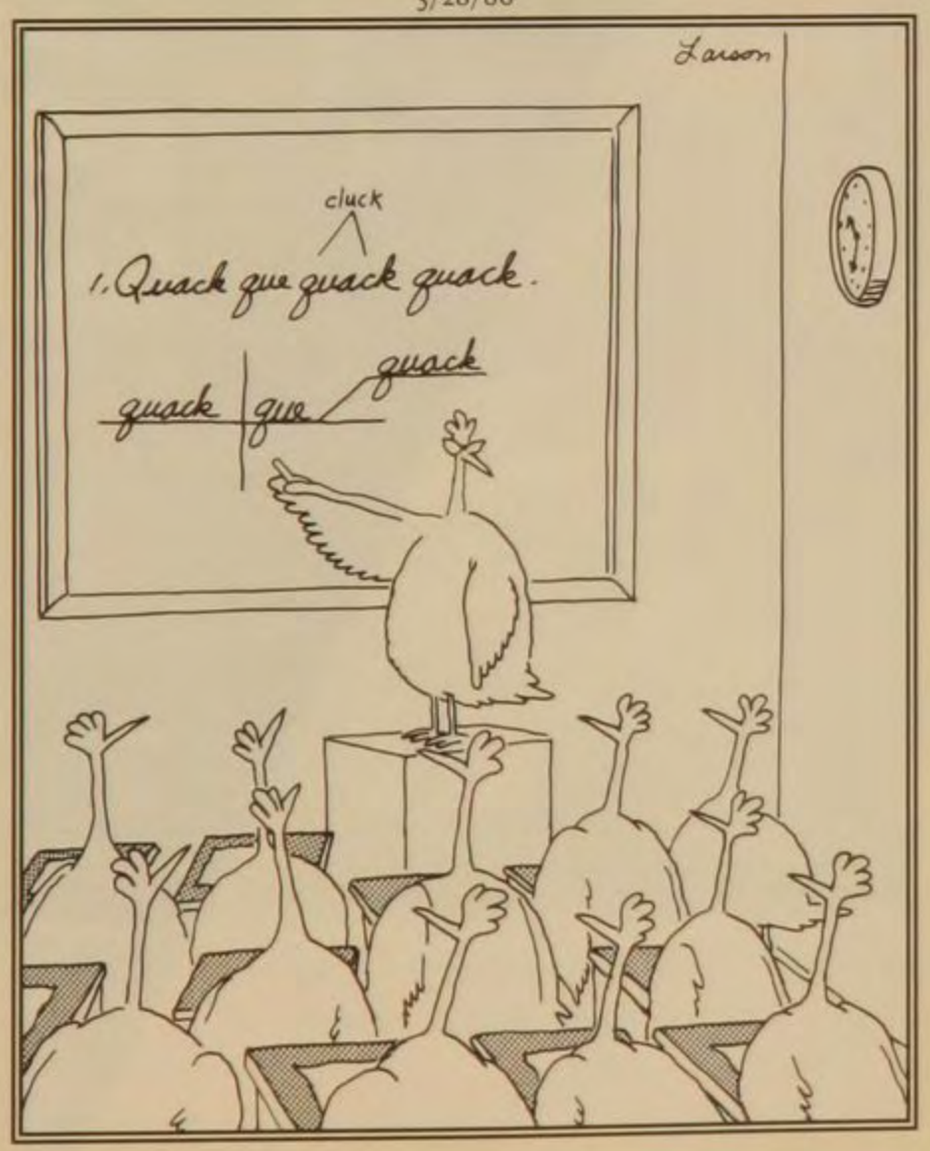
Brain aerobics

5/29/86



Places never to set your electric eel.

5/28/86



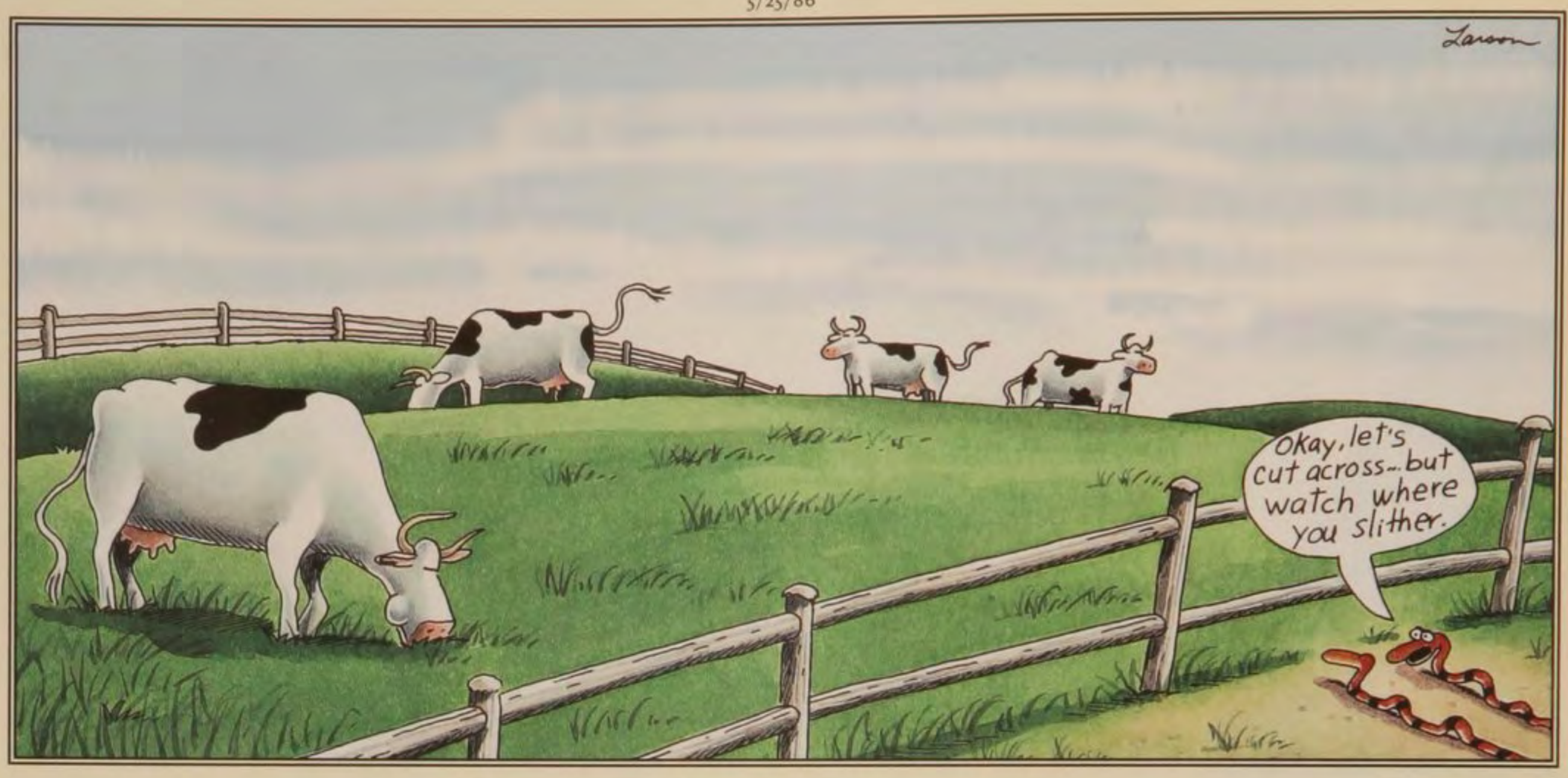
Beginning duck

5/30/86

"Gee, it's good to see the old nest. ... Even that thing down there's gettin' to be a sight for sore eyes."

May 1986

5/25/86



5/26/86

"Hit the bird, Ruth—he's stuck."

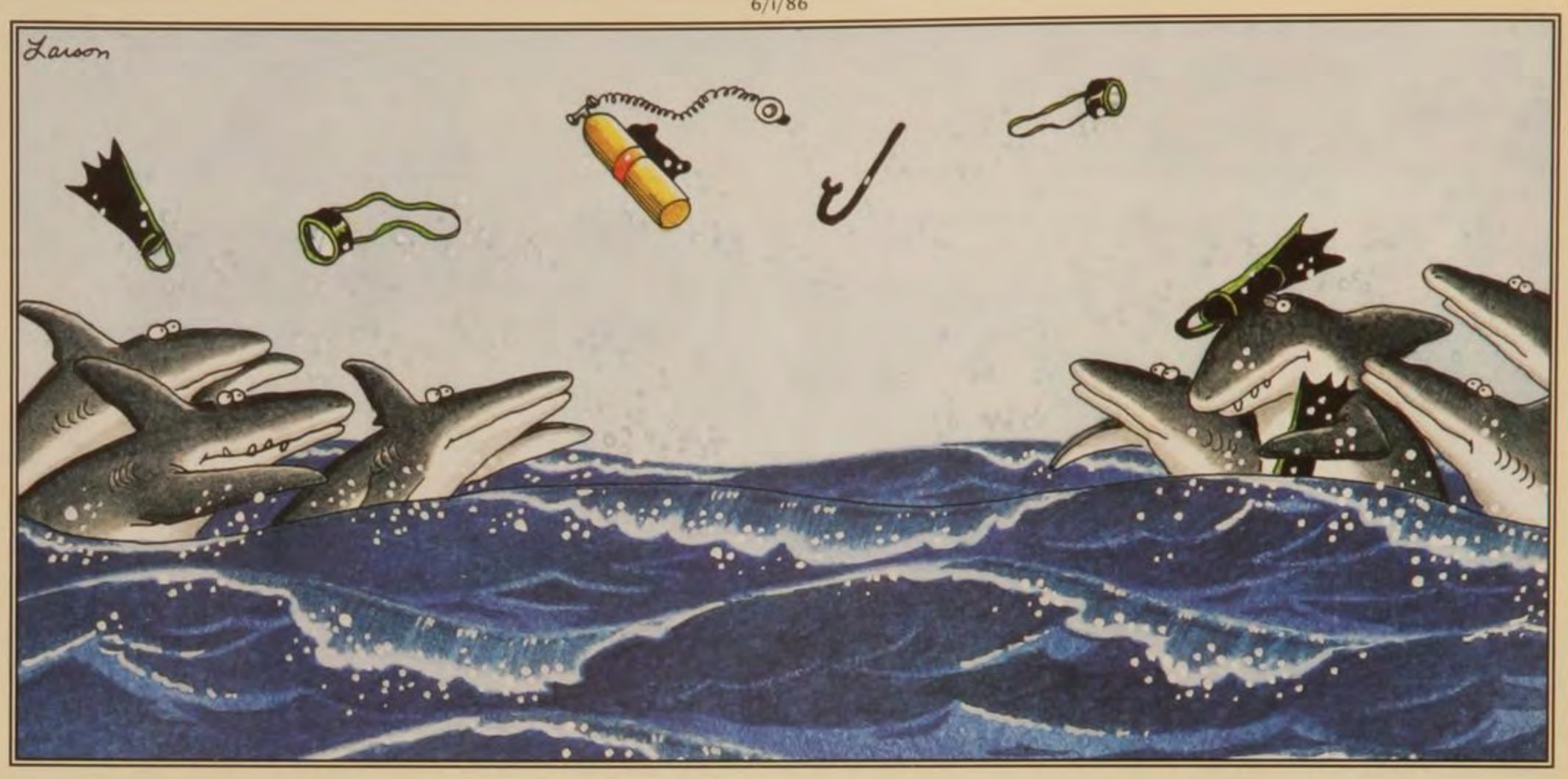
5/31/86

Dog threat letters

June 1986

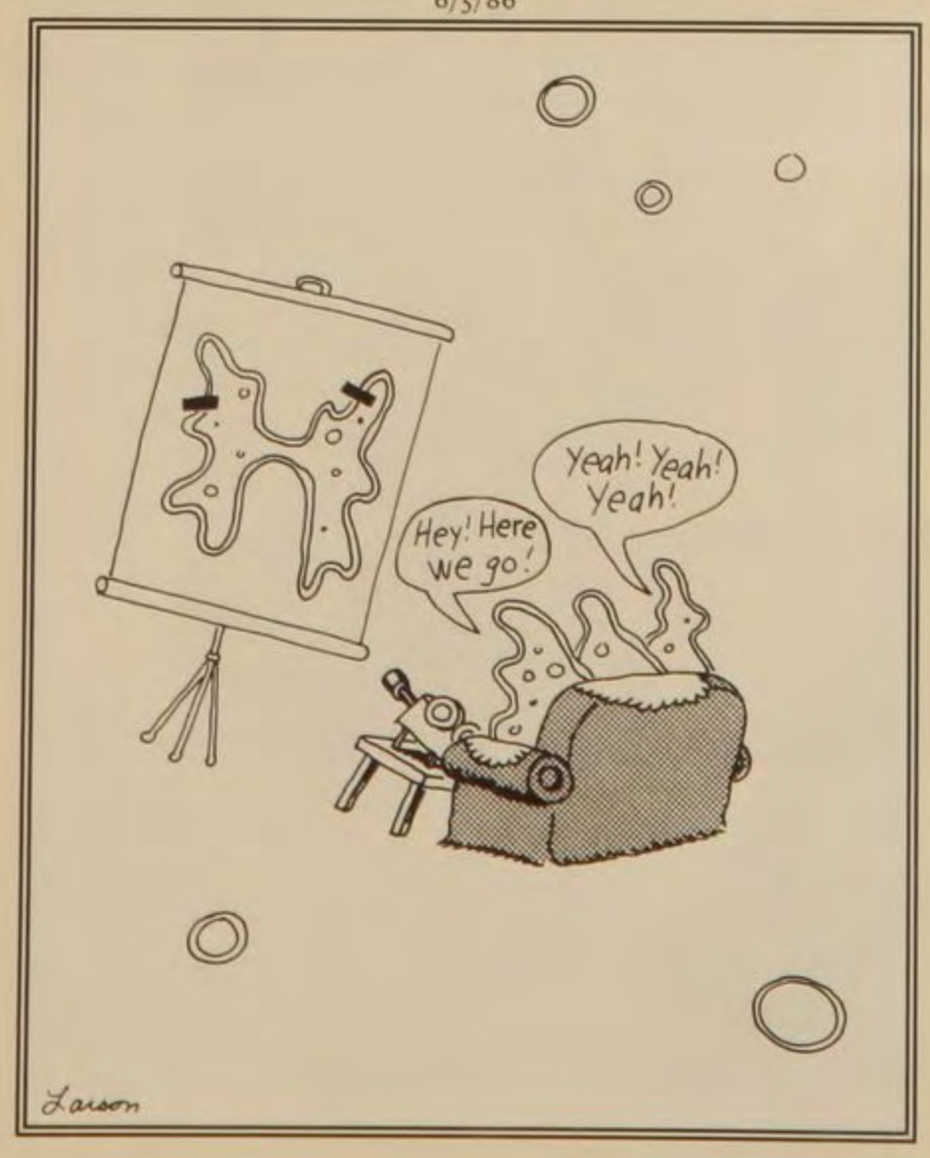
"Bummer of a birthmark, Hal."

6/1/86



Shark food-fights

6/5/86



Amoeba porn flicks

6/6/86

Early appliances

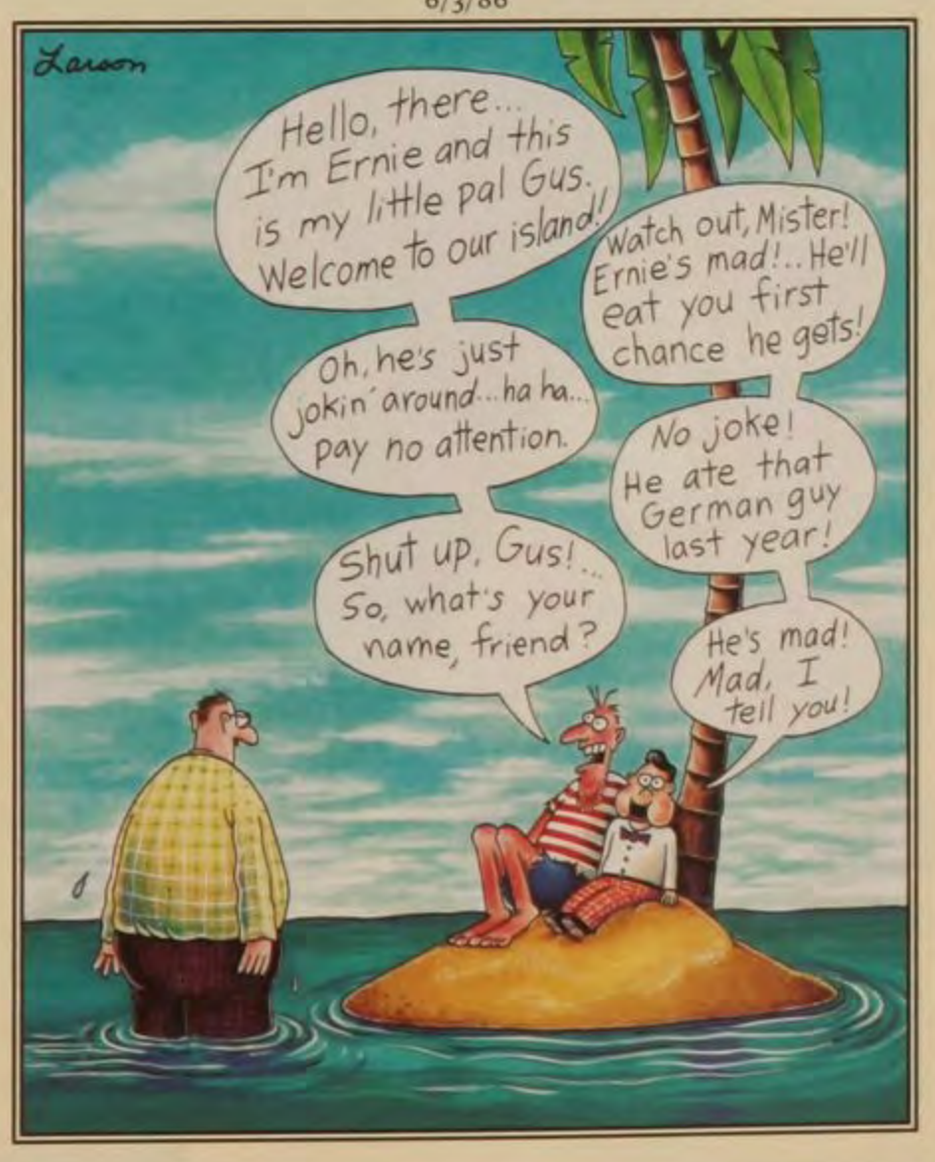
6/9/86

Wasted mirage

6/12/86

"What's this? Your house? ... Yes! Your house is on fire! ... Fly away, dearie! Fly away home!"

6/3/86



6/4/86

"Fourth floor, please."

6/8/86

Dog hell

The Herald Statesman, Yonkers, N.Y., 7/16/86

Cartoon not funny

As a mother of a 3-year-old who is now interested in the newspaper, I am perplexed that you would allow a cartoon like "The Far Side" to be on the same page with "Marvin" and "The Family Circus."

The Sunday supplement funnies are supposed to be entertainment, not "Dog Hell" as "The Far Side" put it. This cartoon does not belong in the "funny papers" because it isn't funny. This type of humor belongs in an adult magazine —not something in a local paper that is (and should be) read by a child. The other mothers I have spoken to feel the same way. If necessary, to be rid of this, I can start a petition of concerned parents or if you can see your way clear, for you, the press, to ask your readers if they want it or not.

I realize that this is not the first letter you've received about this, but I feel that writing to you is the only way you'll find out how your paper affects your reader.

JOY MARTIN
Ossining

Times-Advocate, Escondido, Calif., 1/19/86

'Far Side' is garbage

My wife and I were talking about how disappointed we are with one of the comics you include in your paper. When Gary Larson, creator of "The Far Side," made fun of pornography with "Amoeba Porn Flicks," I was sensitive that my children would see it. I passed it off as just something that slipped by the better judgment of the editor. But when I opened the June 8 edition and saw "The Far Side" in the Sunday funnies depicting "Dog Hell" (reproduced at the right) where dogs carry pooper scoopers and are presumably forced to collect their own feces, I came close to canceling my subscription.

Why don't you get rid of that garbage? We don't need it on the family funny page, and I want to keep my subscription. Whatever happened to "Annie"?

Jerry Jorgenson
Rancho Bernardo

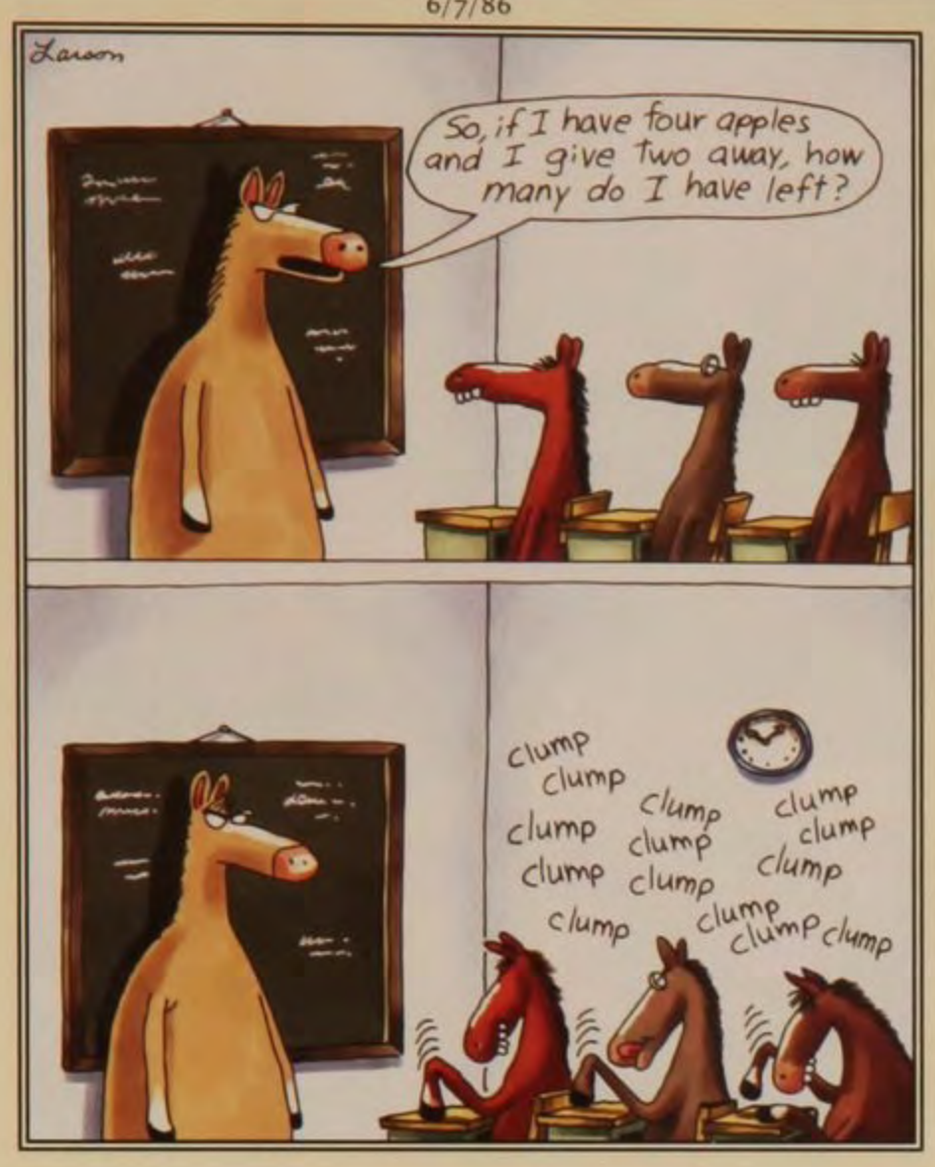
'Far Side' is disgusting

I am April Marie Armani. And I'm 8 years old. And I like to read the funnies on Sunday. On Sunday, June 8, I was very disgusted with the comic called "The Far Side." I thought that to me, as a Christian, it was very unnecessary.

April Marie Armani
Escondido

June 1986

6/7/86

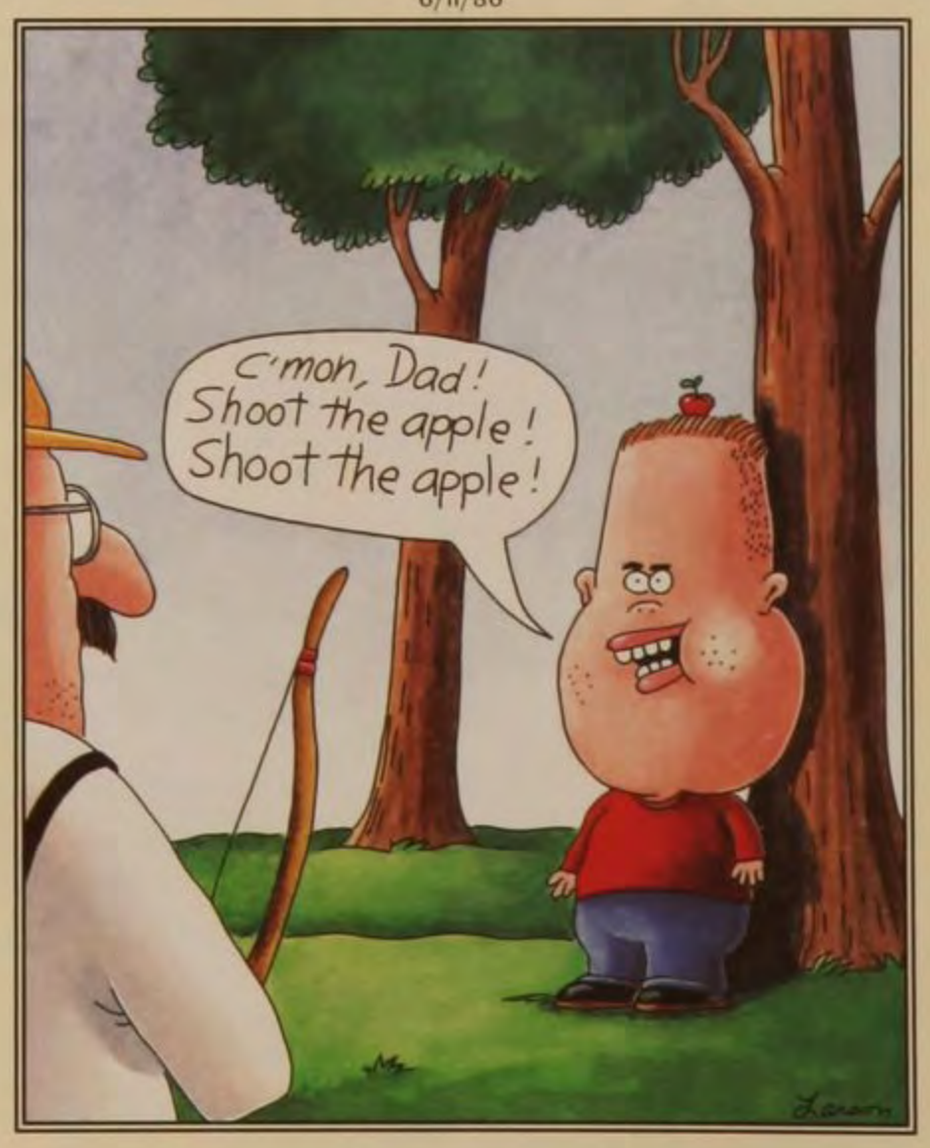


6/10/86

6/13/86

Witch doctor waiting rooms

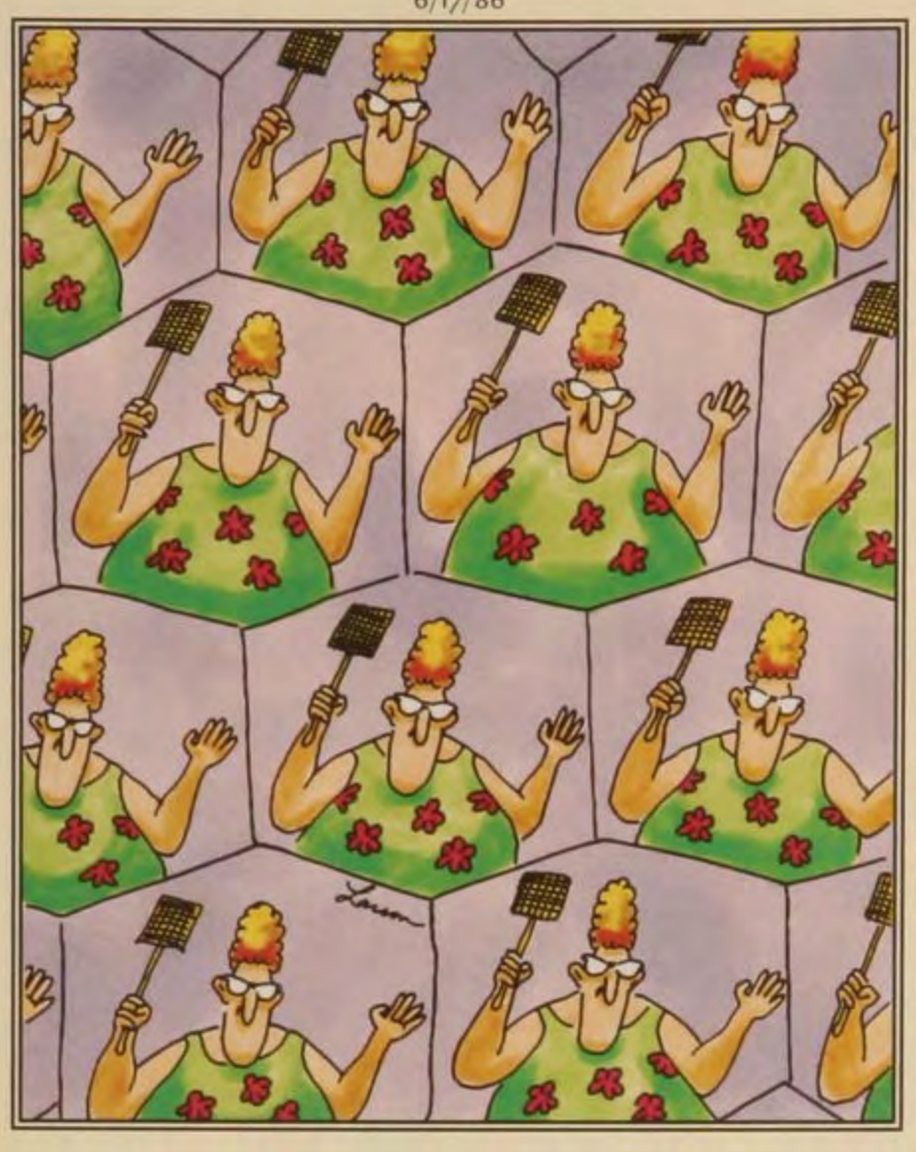
6/11/86



Unknown to most historians, William Tell had an older and less fortunate son named Warren.

June 1986

6/17/86



The last thing a fly ever sees

6/16/86

"Well, that does it! Look at our furniture! The Shuelers have visited us for the last time!"

6/15/86

June 1986

6/22/86

6/18/86

"And that's the hand that fed me."

6/19/86

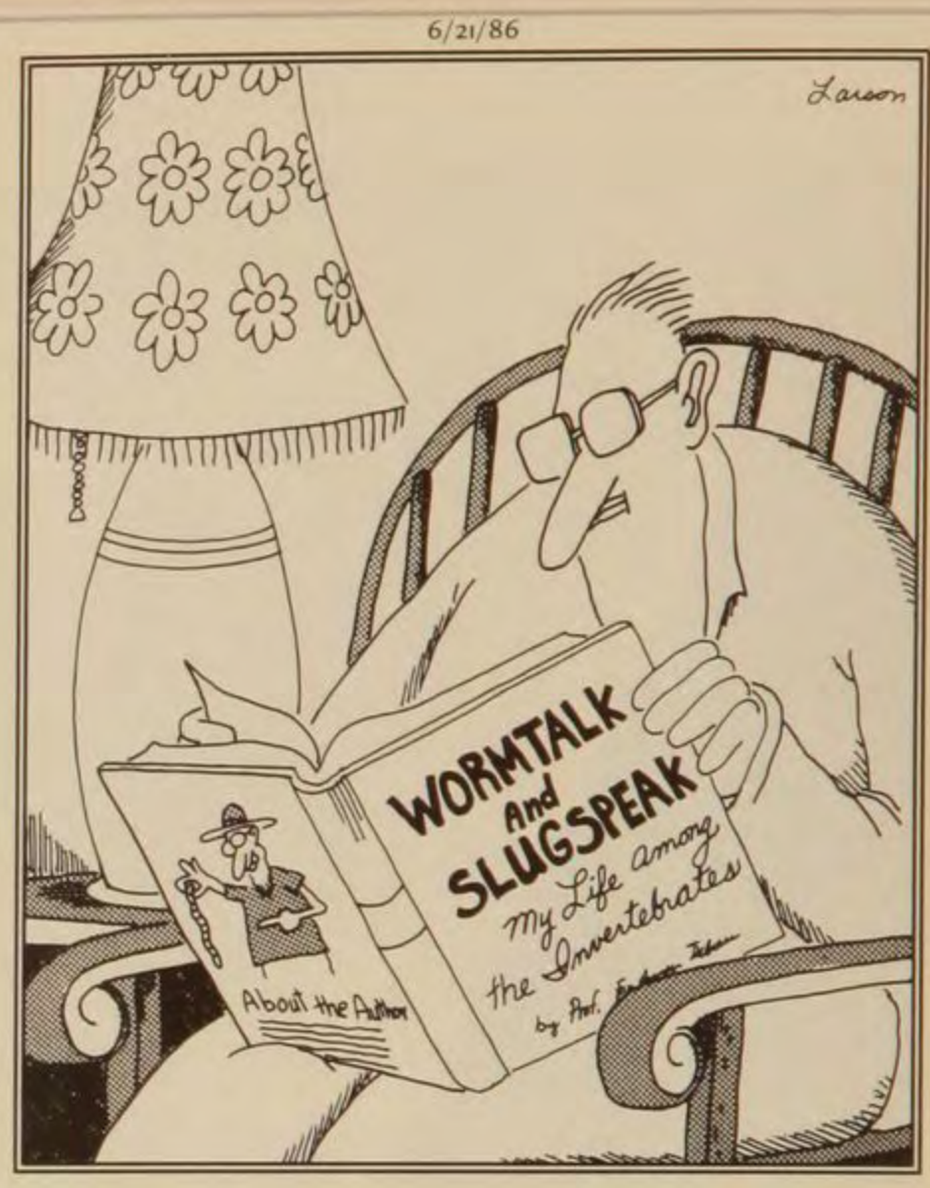
"Whoa! *That* was a good one! Try it, Hobbs—just poke his brain right where my finger is."

June 1986

6/14/86

Roberta takes on a dust rhino.

6/21/86



6/20/86

"You idiot! We want the scent *on* the pillow!
On the pillow!"

6/24/86

16th-century Mona wanna-bes

June 1986

6/23/86

"I heard that, Simmons! I'm a wimp, am I? ... Well, to heck with you—to heck with *all* of you!"

6/26/86

The mark of Deero

6/27/86

6/25/86

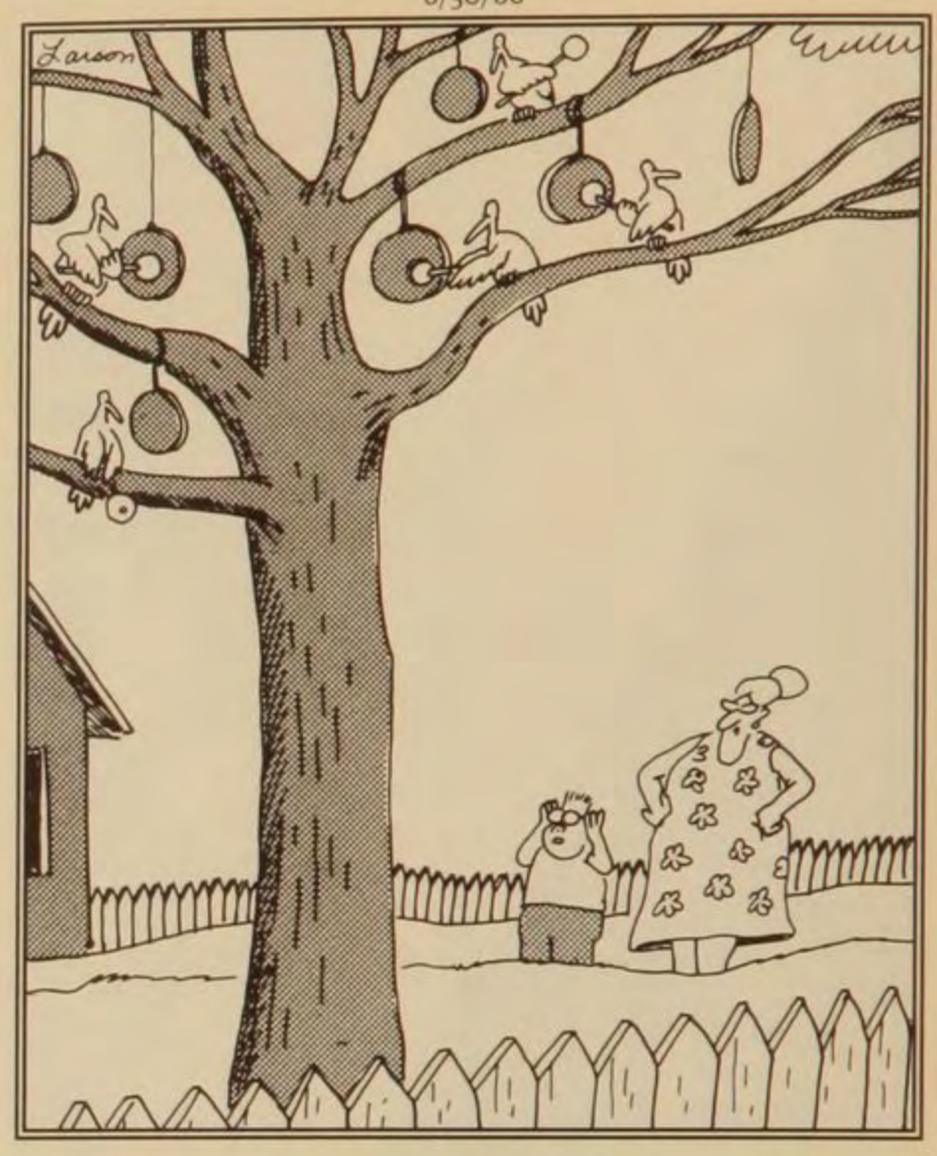
"Wait a minute, Vince! Last summer—remember? Some little kid caught you, handled you, and tossed you back in the swamp. ... *That's* where you got 'em."

June 1986

6/28/86

Before paper and scissors

6/30/86



Gong birds

6/29/86

7/1/86

7/2/86

An impressionable moment in the childhood of Buffalo Bill

7/3/86

The primitive game of "Kiss-the-mammoth-and-run"

July 1986

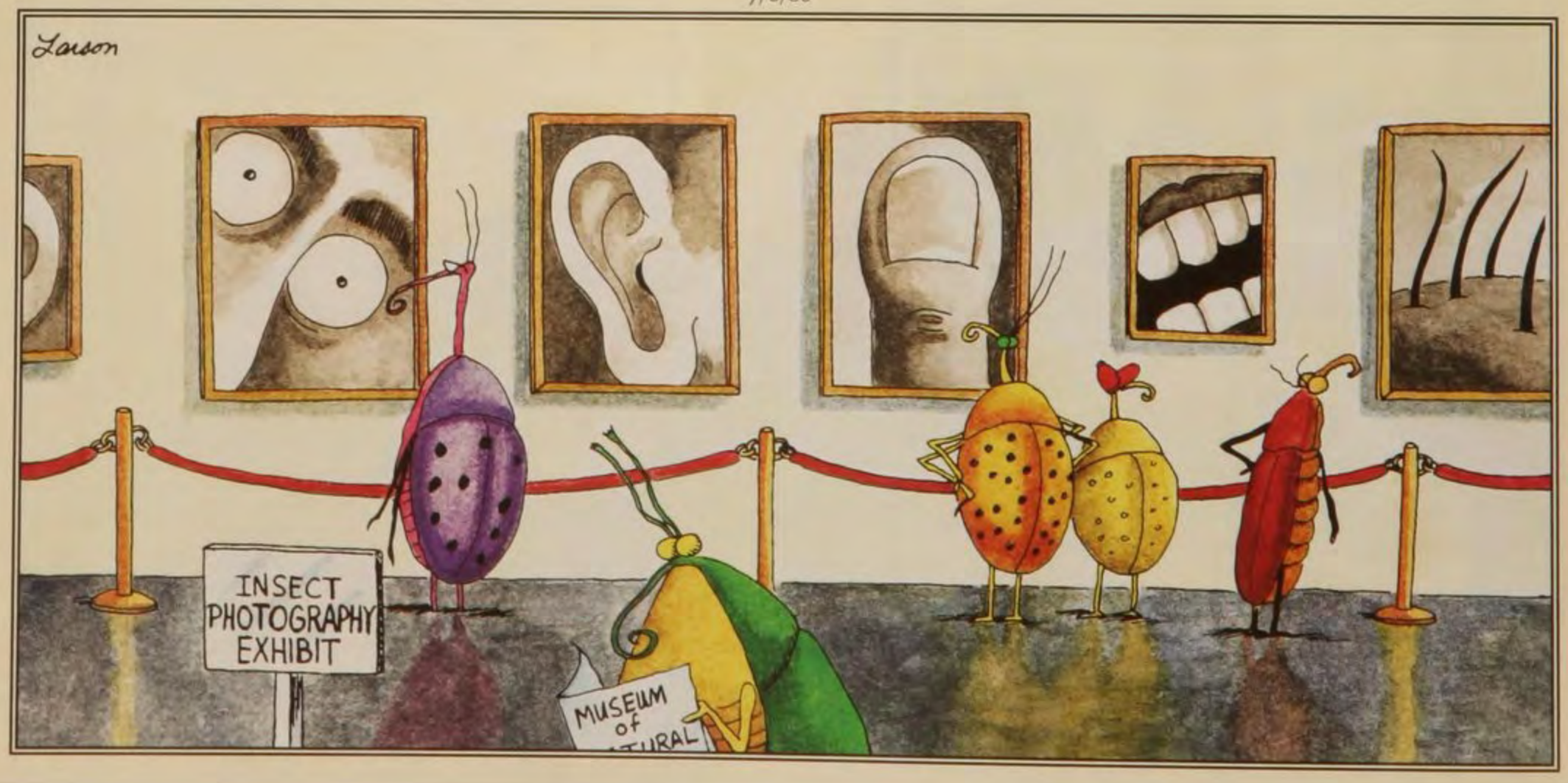
7/4/86

"Think about it, Ed. ... The class Insecta contains 26 orders, almost 1,000 families, and over 750,000 described species—but I can't shake the feeling we're all just a bunch of bugs."

7/5/86

"Okay, folks! ... It's a wrap!"

7/6/86



July 1986

7/8/86

"Mom! ... Earl's grossing me out with a mouthful of worms!"

7/9/86

Flora practical jokes

7/13/86

Alien student drivers

July 1986

"Stay away from that character down there, Barb—he's poison for sure."

"Well, I'll be! ... Honey, it's the Worthingtons—our favorite couple of slimebags!"

African rakesnake

"I don't know what you're insinuating, Jane, but I haven't seen your Harold all day—besides, surely you know I would only devour my own husband!"

July 1986

7/16/86

"I don't mean to exacerbate this situation, Roger, but I think I'm quite close to bursting into maniacal laughter and imagining your nose is really a German sausage."

7/17/86

7/15/86

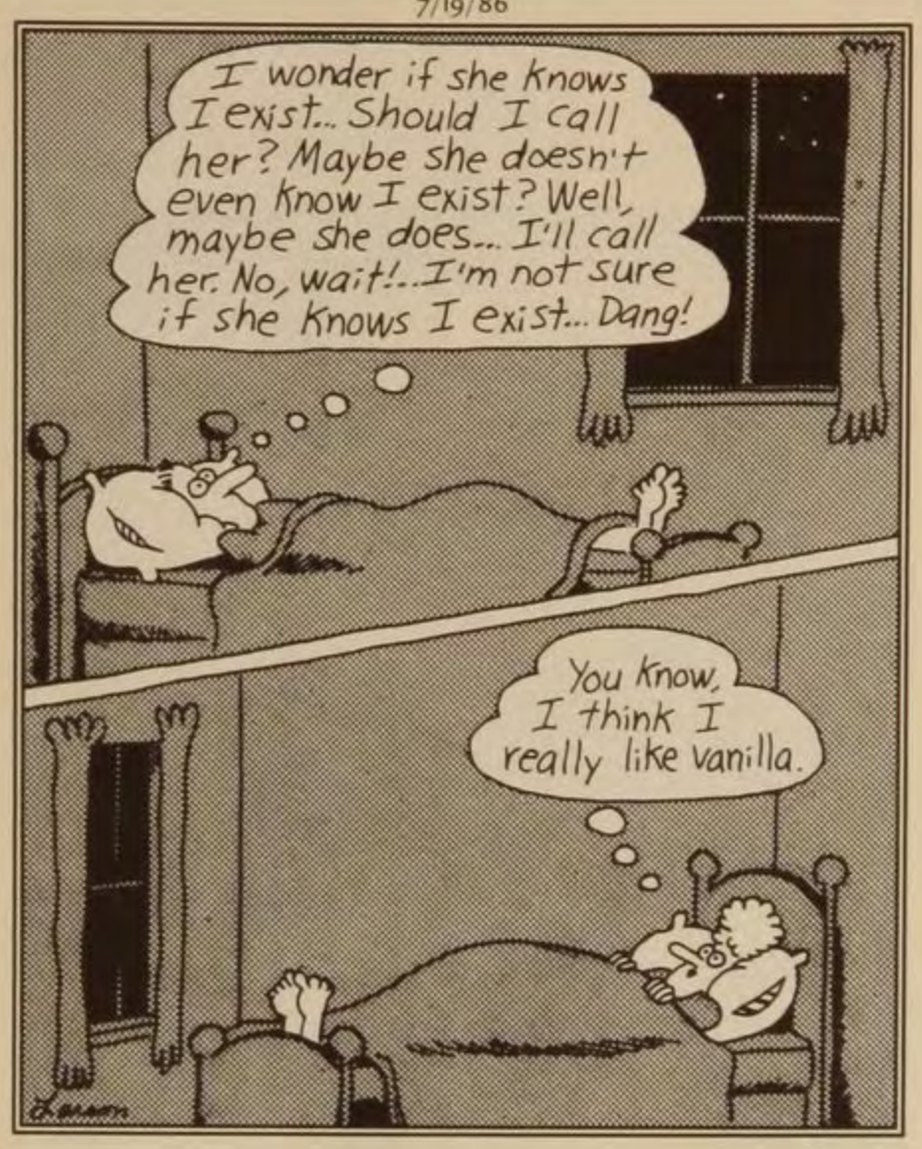
"We're gettin' old, Jake."

7/12/86

50,000 B.C.: Gak Eisenberg invents the first and last silent mammoth whistle.

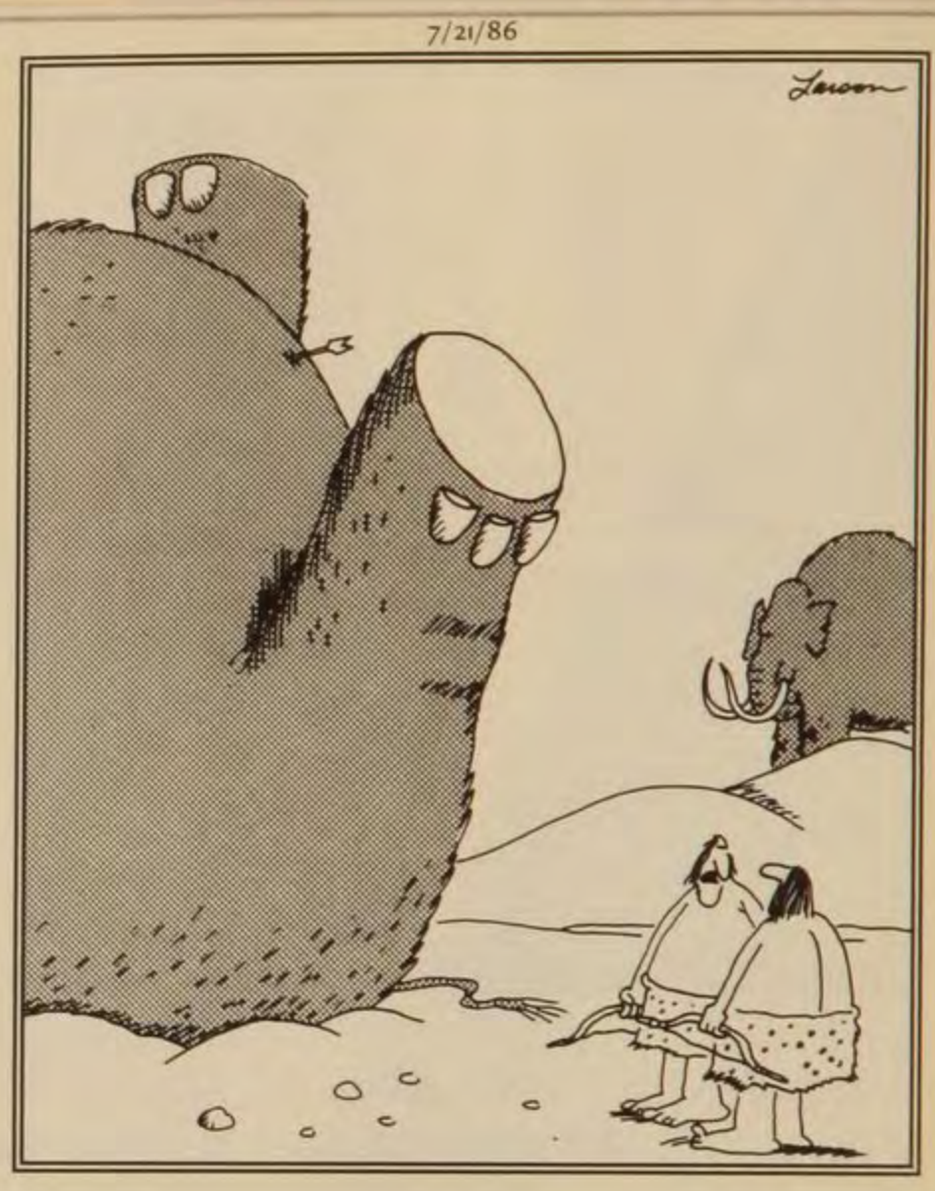
July 1986

7/19/86



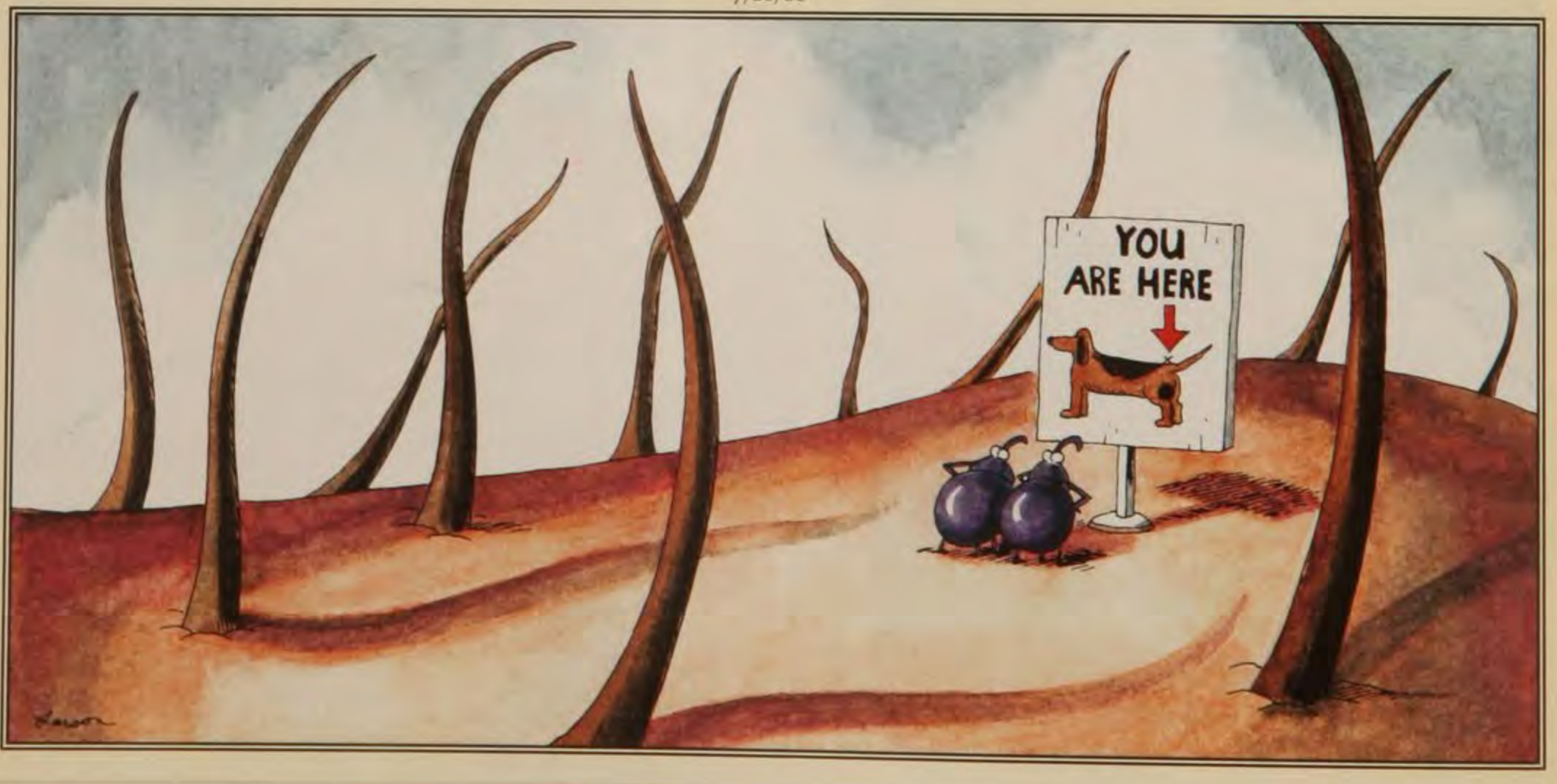
Same planet, different worlds

7/21/86



"We should write that spot down."

7/20/86



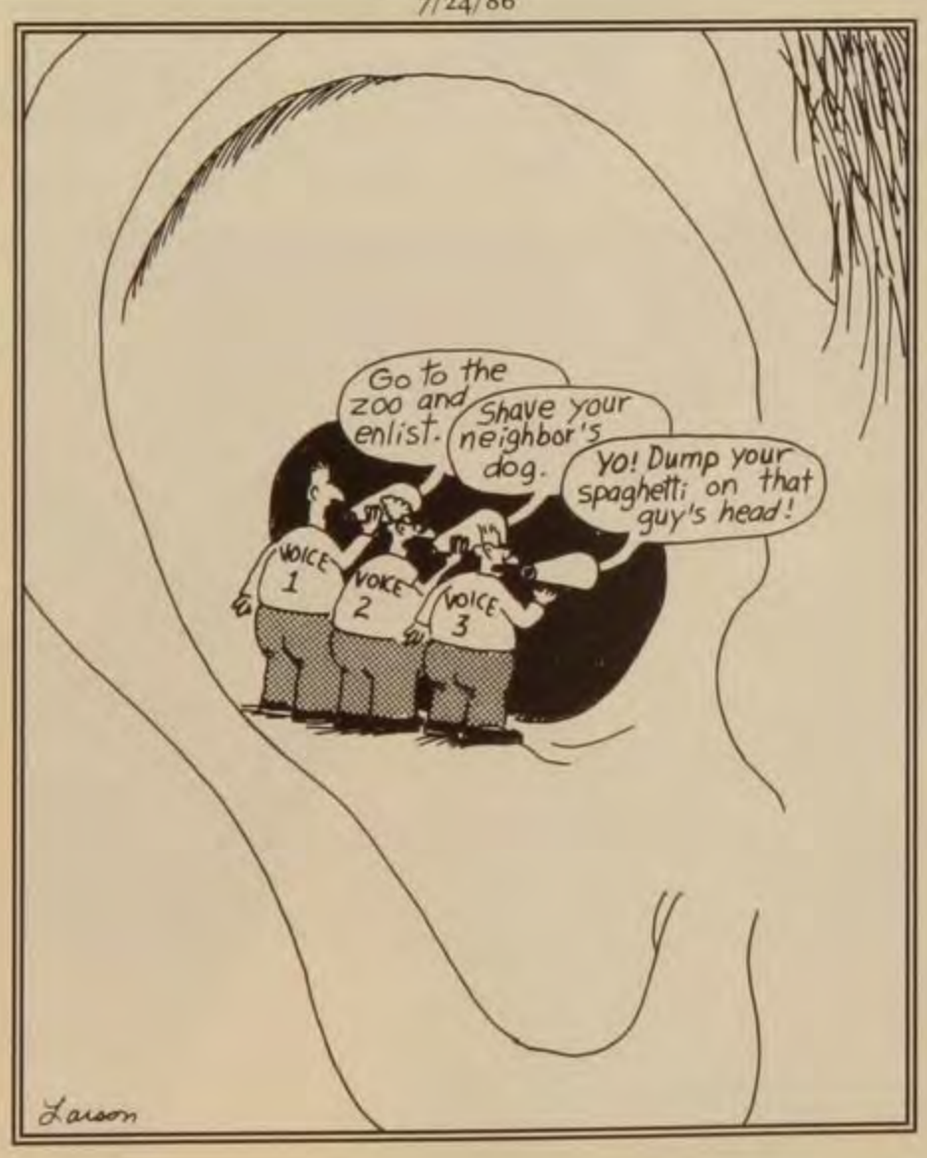
July 1986

7/22/86

7/23/86

Fast-food farms

7/24/86



Inside the ear of crazy people

7/25/86

"*Another* nutcracker? Well, this *is* my lucky day!"

July 1986

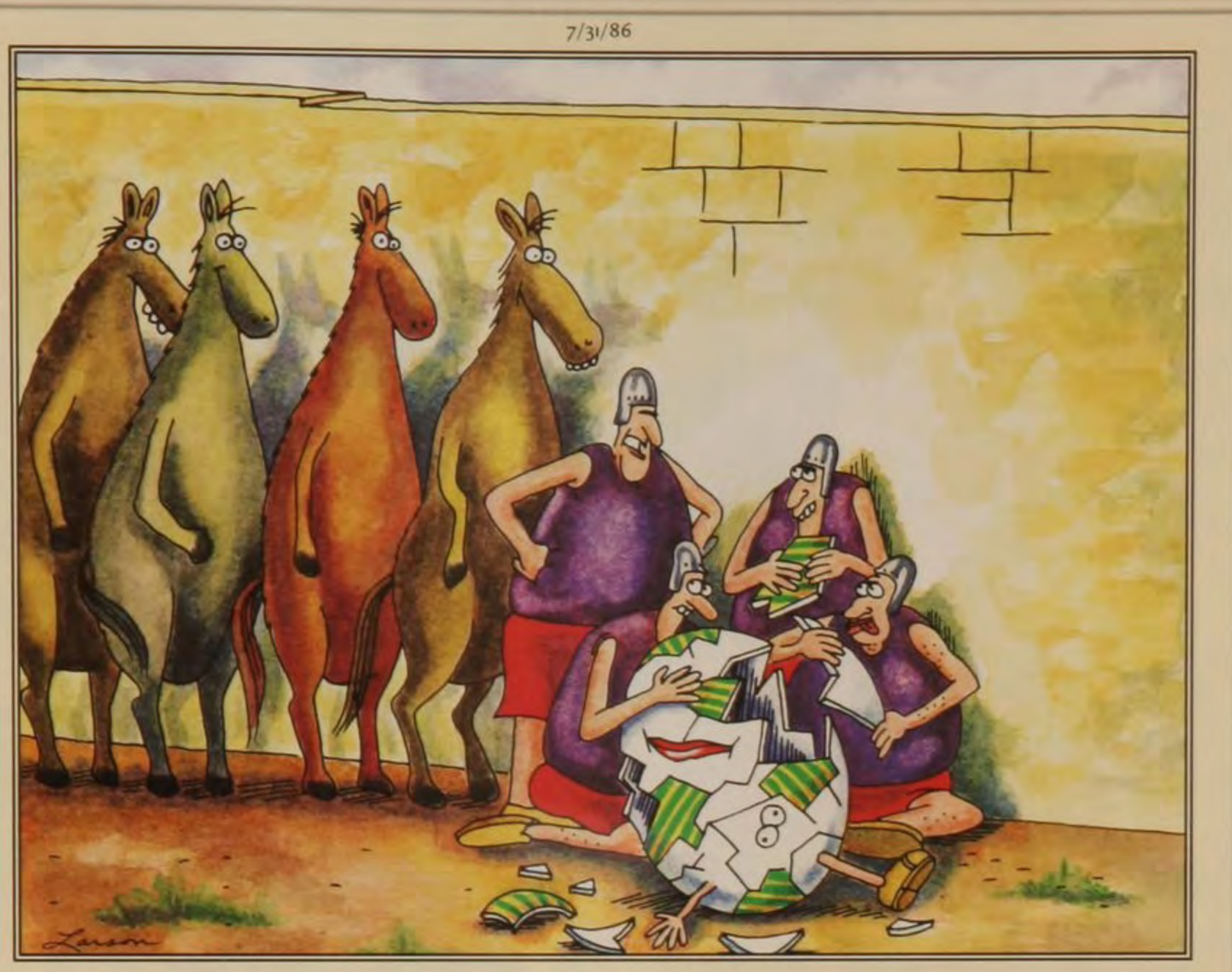
7/18/86

"I'm sorry, Mr. Caldwell, but the big guy's on his way out. If you want my opinion, take him home, find a quiet spot out in the yard, and squash him."

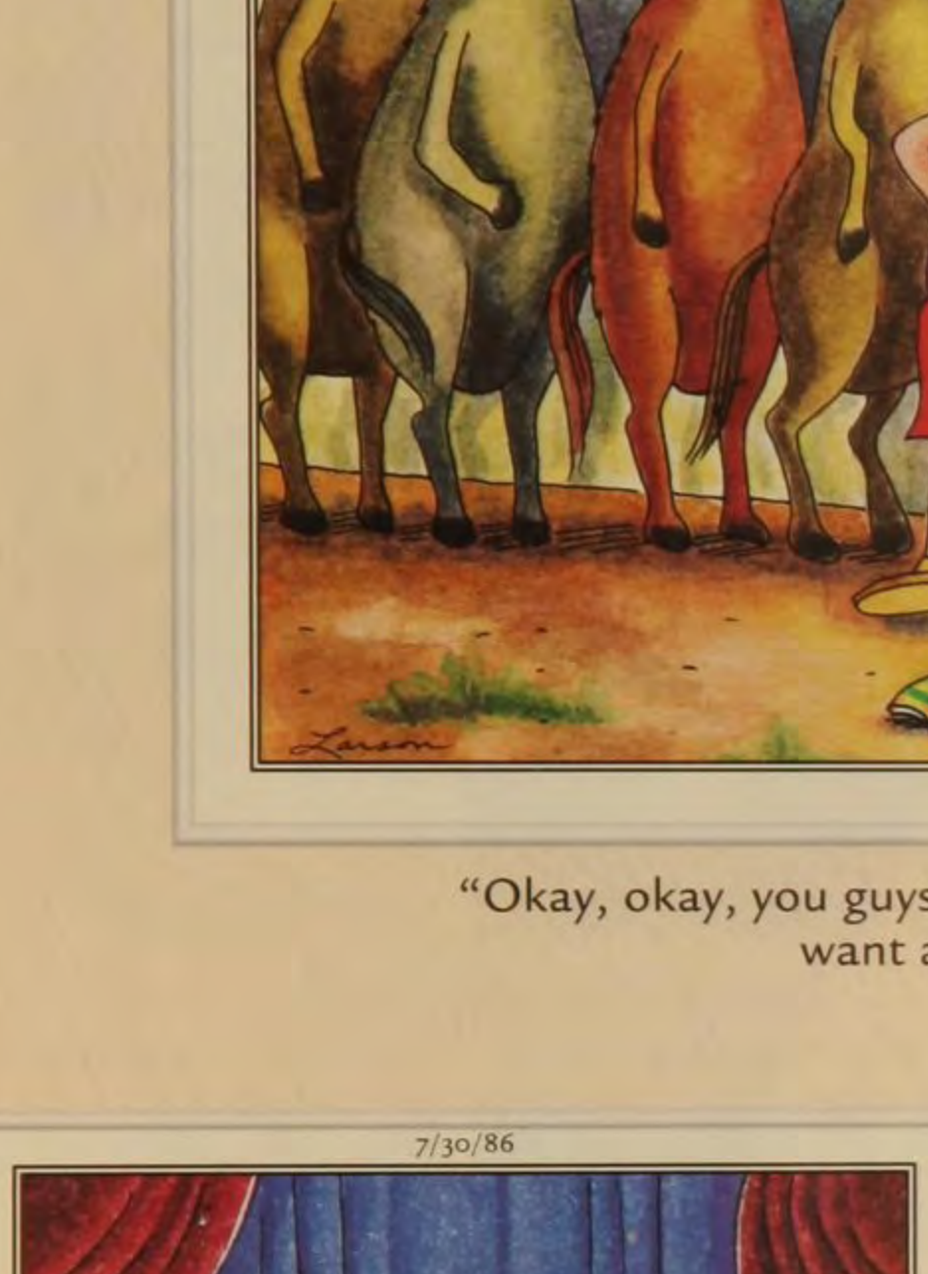
7/28/86

7/26/86

July 1986



"Okay, okay, you guys have had your chance—the horses want another shot at it."



Appliance healers

July 31, 86

Dear Sir,

I have seen some rude, nasty, cartoons in my life, but this is the worst.

We are having a hard enough time trying to keep Christianity in the schools and other places. To publish a cartoon(?) like this slandering a "Man of God", is just about as low as you can get.

[redacted] is a man of God and I have seen many miracles in his services. Lots of people don't like him, but a lot don't like the Pope either.

This is rude and uncalled for.

Truly,
Preston P. Peck

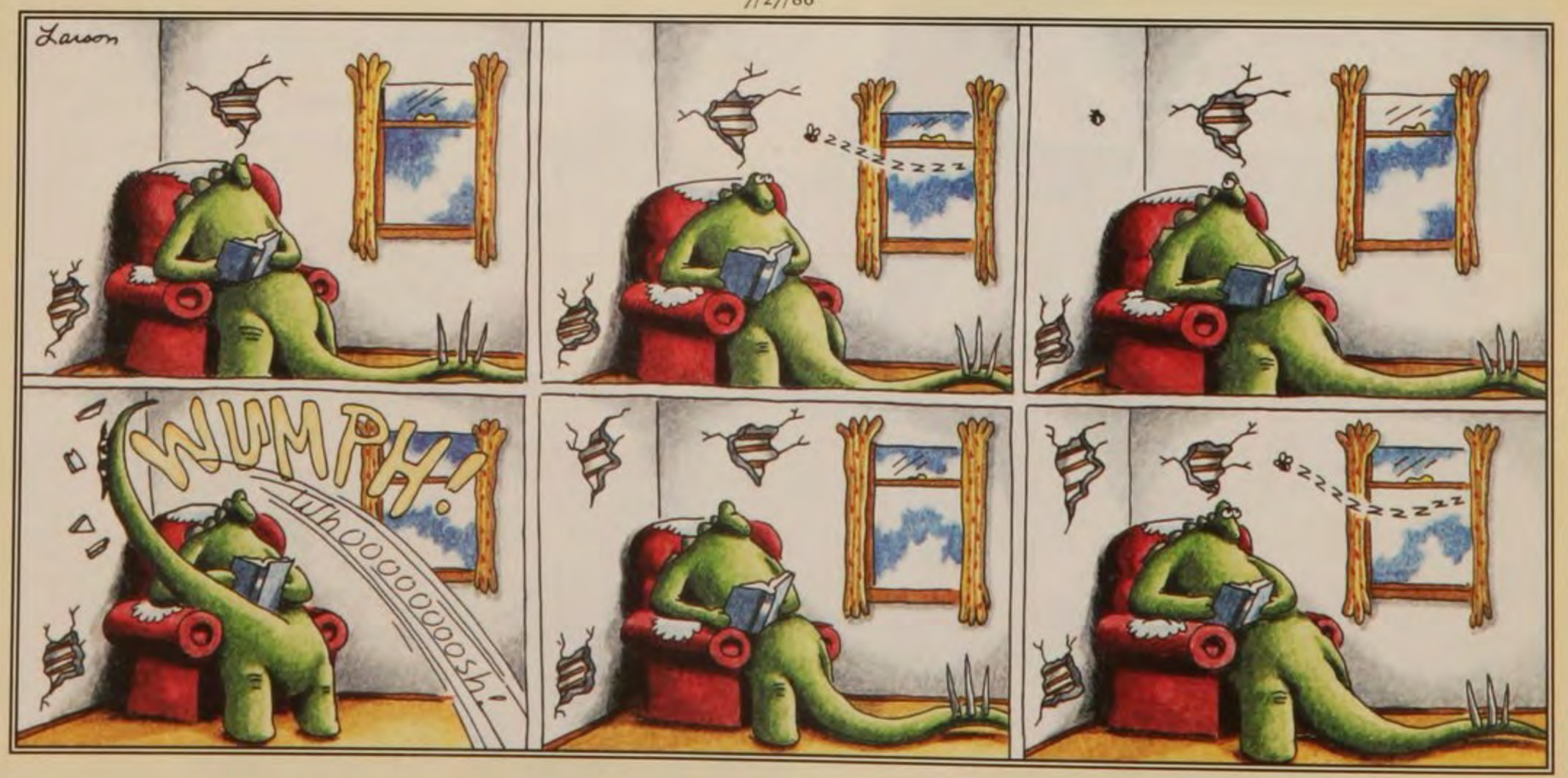
P.S. I HAVE PRAYED FOR A CBR TO STRT.
HAVEN'T YOU?

July 1986

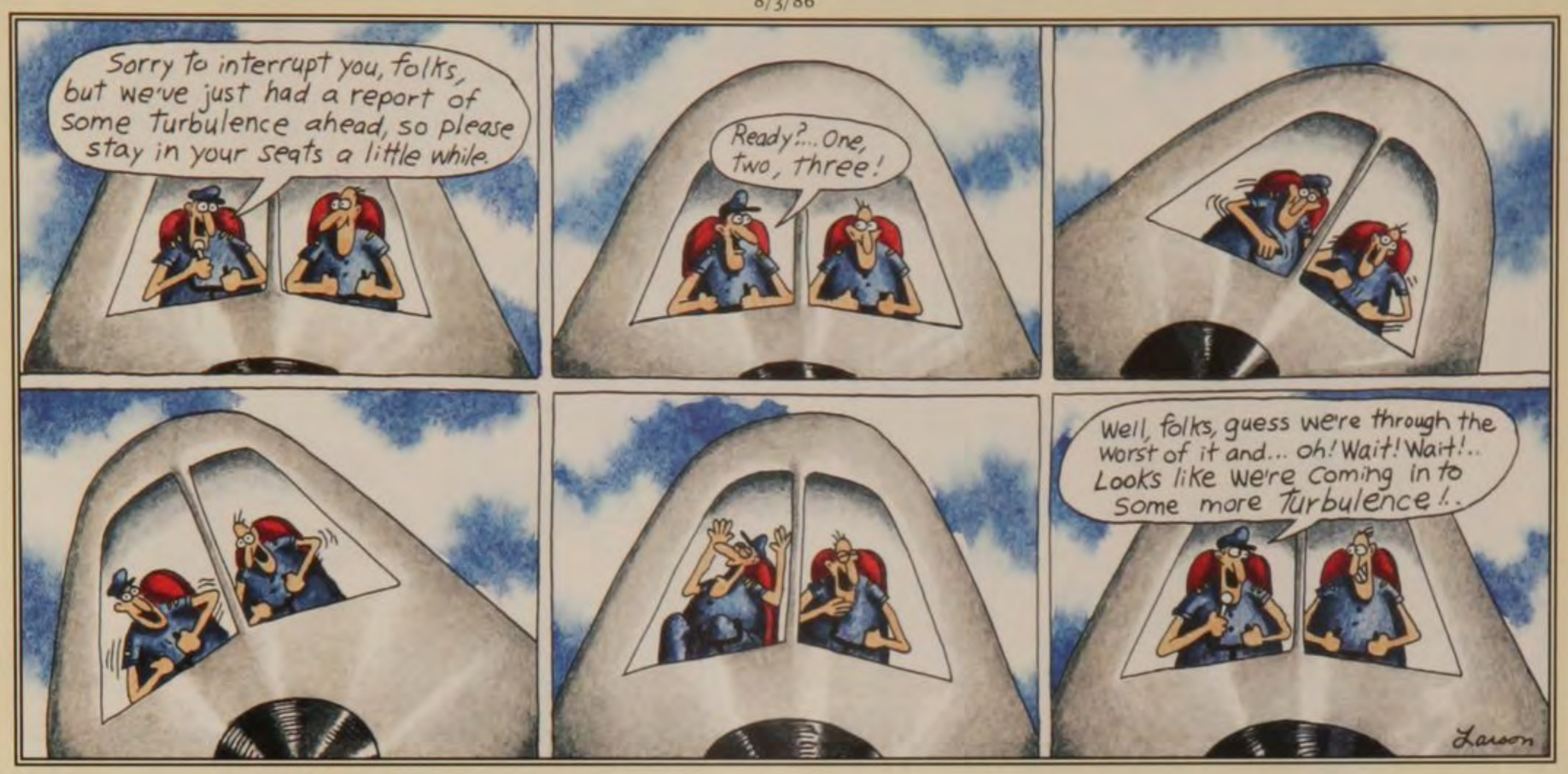
7/29/86

"Hold it right there, Frank! ... If you're gonna shake, you do it in another room!"

7/27/86



8/3/86



8/1/86

Goldfish little brothers

August 1986

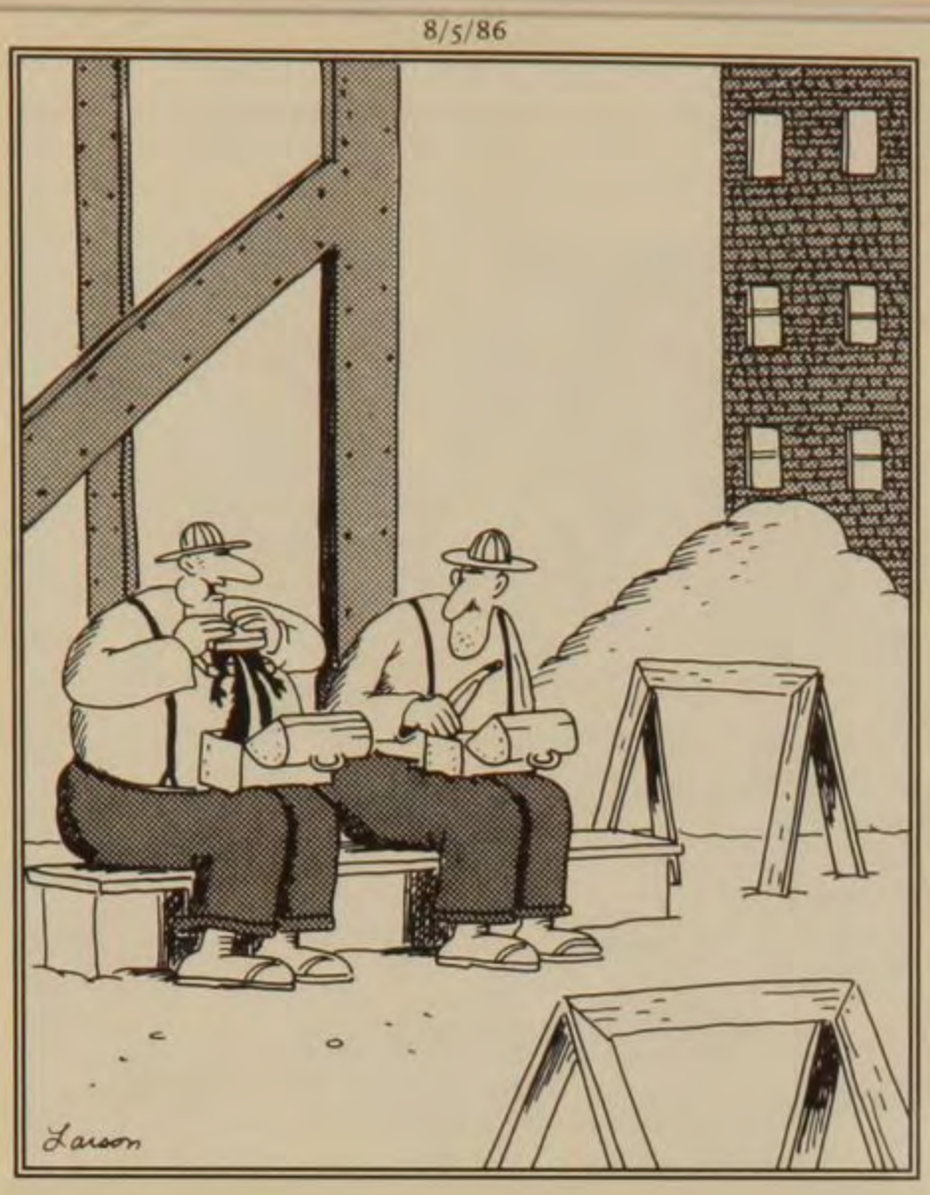
"As I suspected, Mr. Sullivan—just a flesh wound, just a flesh wound."

"Coincidence, ladies and gentlemen? Coincidence that my client just *happened* to live across from the A-1 Mask Co., just *happened* to walk by their office windows each day, and they, in turn, just *happened* to stumble across this new design?"

"Egad! Willard's home early! Don't move—his vision's not very good, but his sense of smell and hearing are quite acute."

"Henry! Hurry or you're gonna miss it—ghost riders in the kitchen!"

August 1986



"Skunk sandwich, Bill ... mmmmm ... skunk sandwich. ... Trade for that banana?"

"You know, I wish you'd get rid of that hideous thing—and I think it's just plain dangerous to even have one in the house."

Midway through the exam, Allen pulls out a bigger brain.

August 1986

8/10/86

8/11/86

"Well! No wonder! ... Look who's been loose the whole evening!"

8/18/86

"Hey! That's milk! And you said you were all empty, you stinkin' liar!"

August 1986

8/12/86

Whale fitness classes

8/16/86

The monster snorkel: allows your child to breathe comfortably without exposing vulnerable parts to an attack.

8/17/86

The Snakes of War

They weren't the most evil people in the world, nor the best. They were the Village of the Darned.

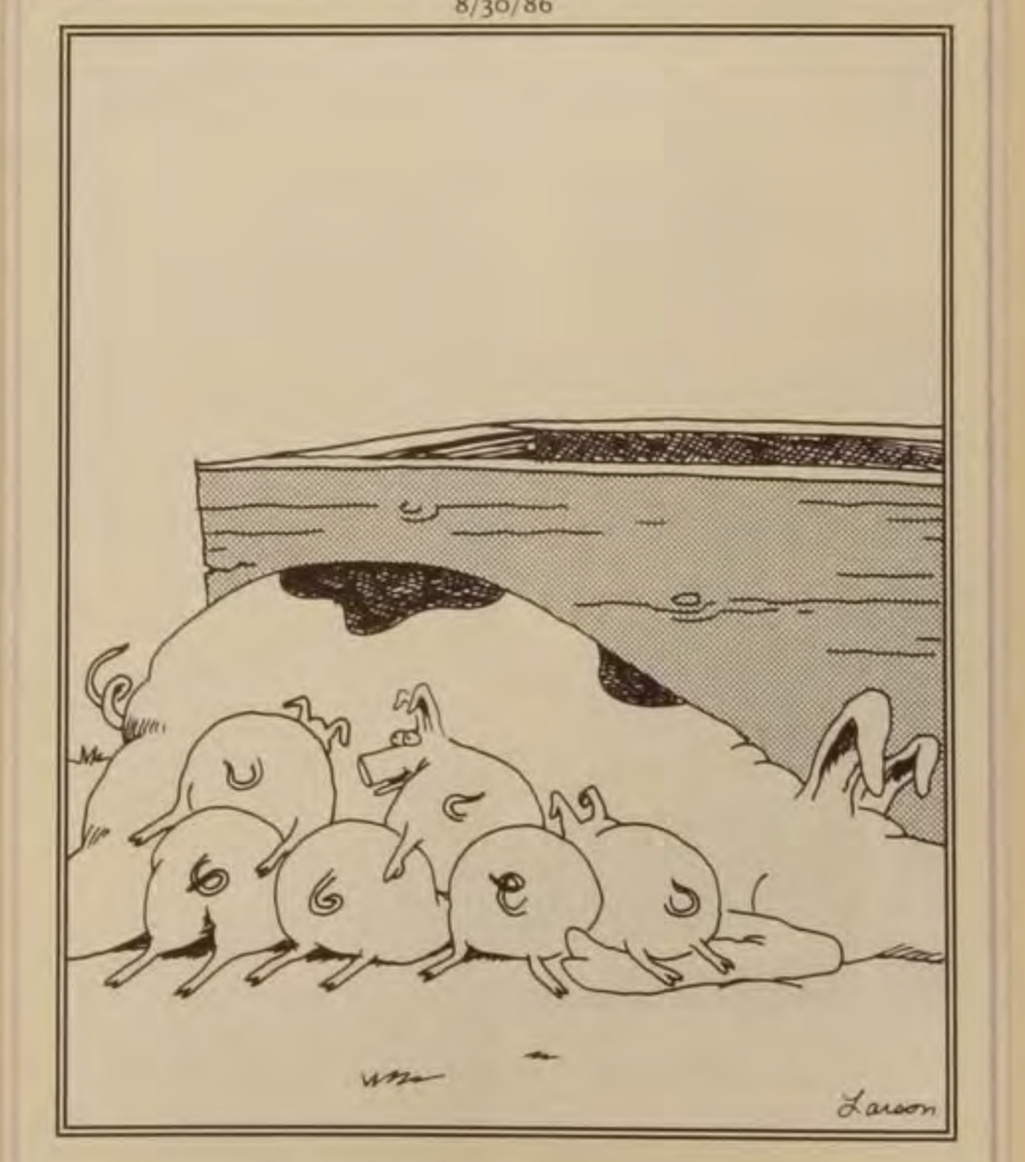
"Well, shoot! There's my herd! ... Thank you anyway, ma'am."

August 1986

Their reunion was both brief and awkward, each still bearing the wounds from that ugly "Jane incident."

"He's dead, all right—beaked in the back ... and you know this won't be easy to solve."

"For the love of— ... Somethin's been messin' with these chickens!"



"Hey! I think I'm getting Orange Crush over here."

August 1986

8/19/86

"Holy moley, Loretta! Not only is it still there,
look what it did to the end of my stick!"

8/24/86

August 1986

8/25/86

"Allen, you jerk! Dad told us not to do that or we'd scare the fish!"

8/27/86

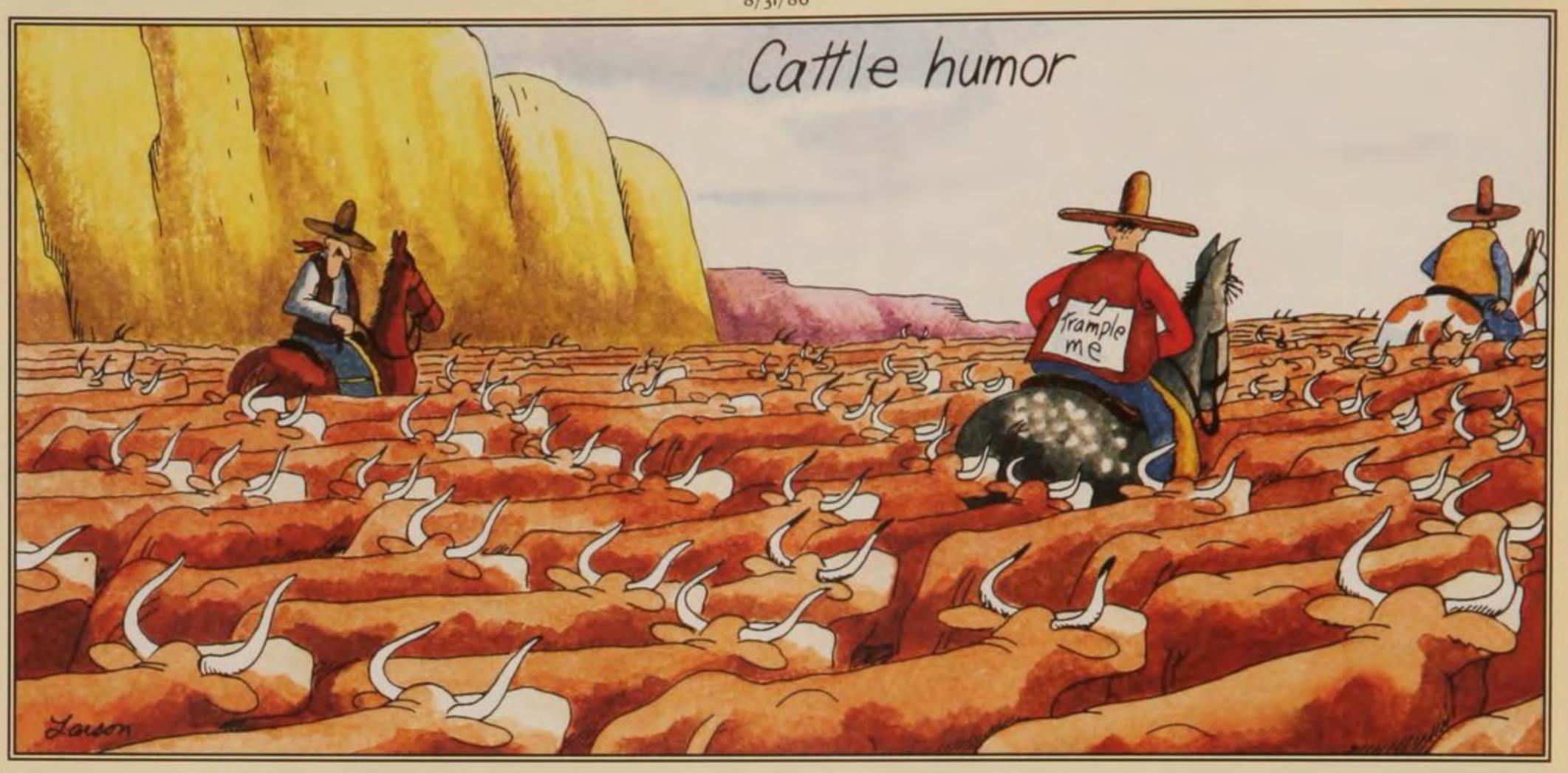
Inside the sun

8/20/86

"Randy, you idiot! Never take an elevator in an emergency!"

August 1986

8/31/86



8/28/86

"Stimulus, response! Stimulus, response!
Don't you ever *think*?"

9/4/86

Dirk brings his family tree to class.

9/7/86

September 1986

9/1/86

"You know what I think, Vernon? I think you're hiding one of those things the Indians bury up to their necks—that's what I think!"

9/2/86

Just another old wives' tale

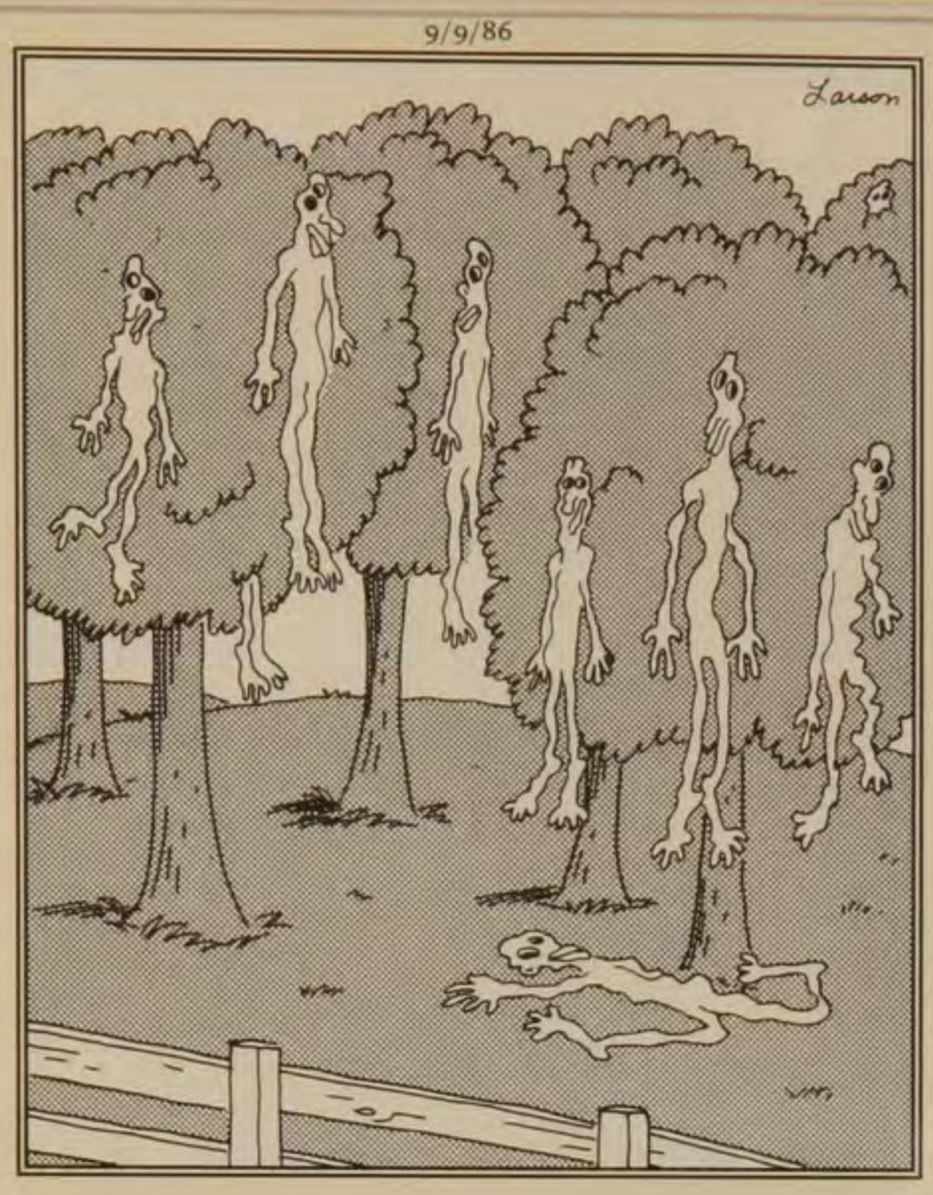
9/3/86

Never put your tongue on a glacier.

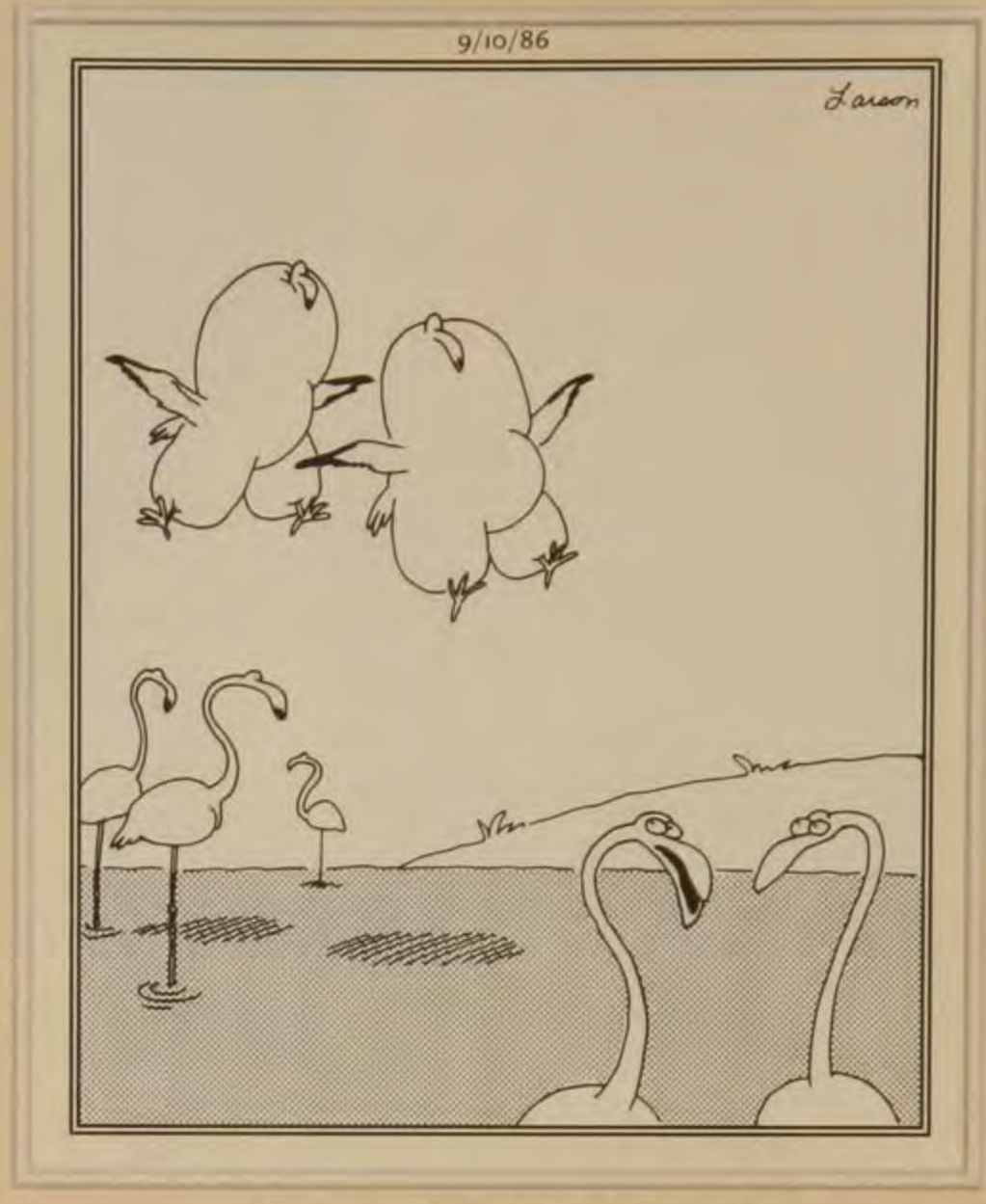
9/5/86

"Out! Everyone out! ... I've had it with this 'symbiosis' baloney!"

September 1986

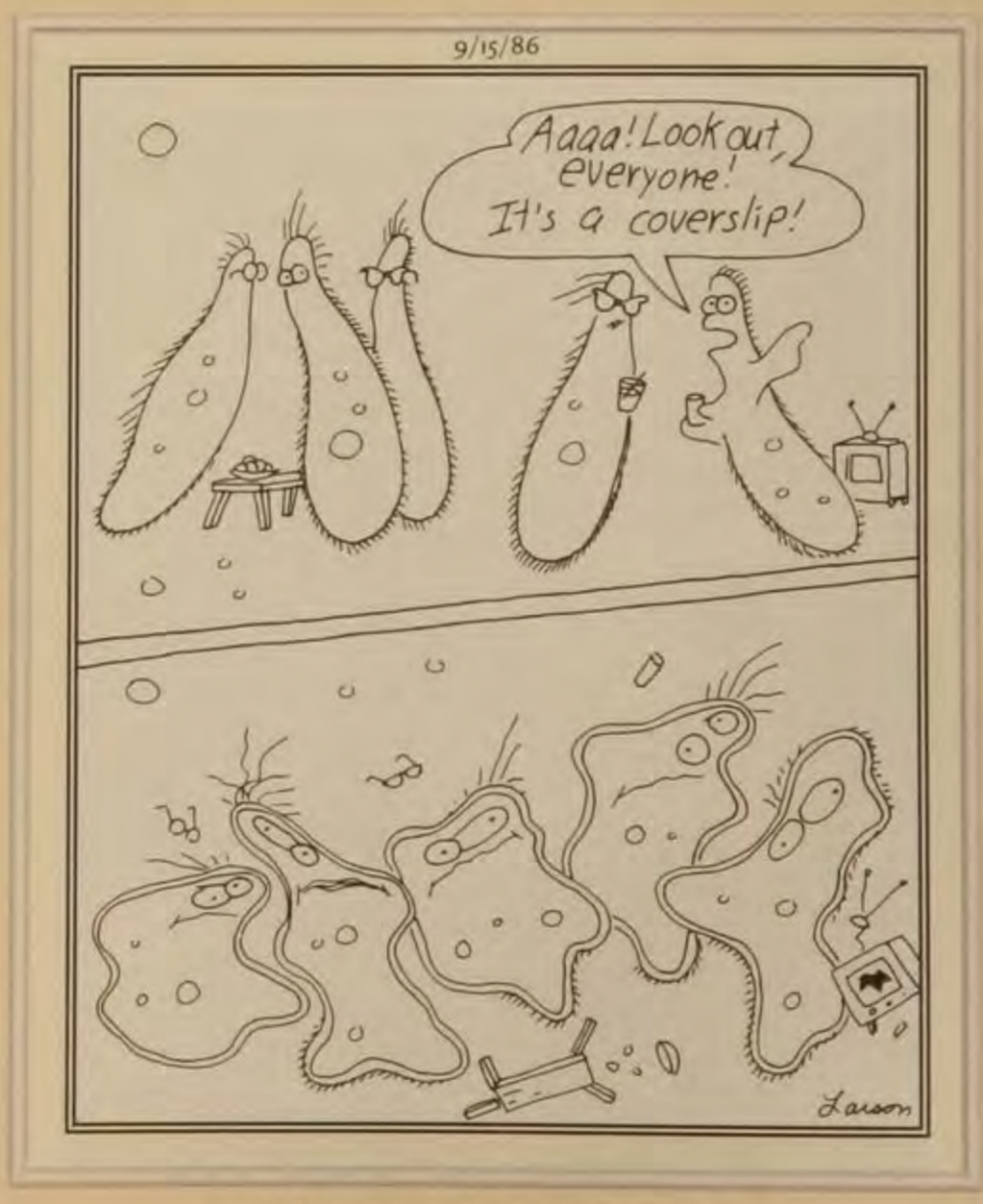


Skin orchards



"Gangway! ... Here come the Morrison brothers."

"You know, I bet your kids and Bruno would like to go outside where they'd have room to really play."



Life on a microscope slide

September 1986

9/6/86

In that one split second, when the choir's last note had ended but before the audience could respond, Vinnie Conswego belches the phrase, "That's all, folks."

9/8/86

"Mr. Osborne, may I be excused? My brain is full."

9/12/86

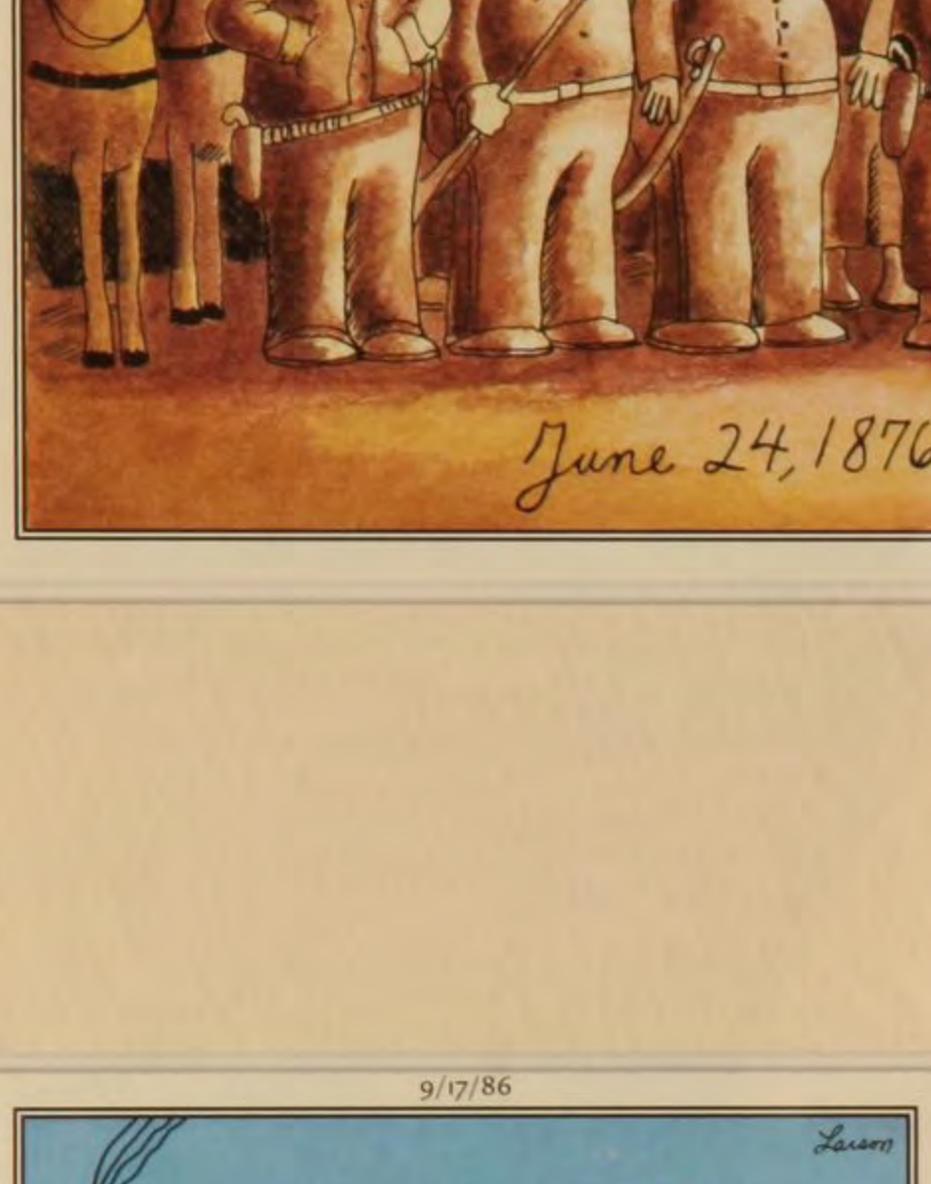
9/13/86

Volume five in a series

9/14/86

June 24, 1876: Custer's last group photo

9/17/86

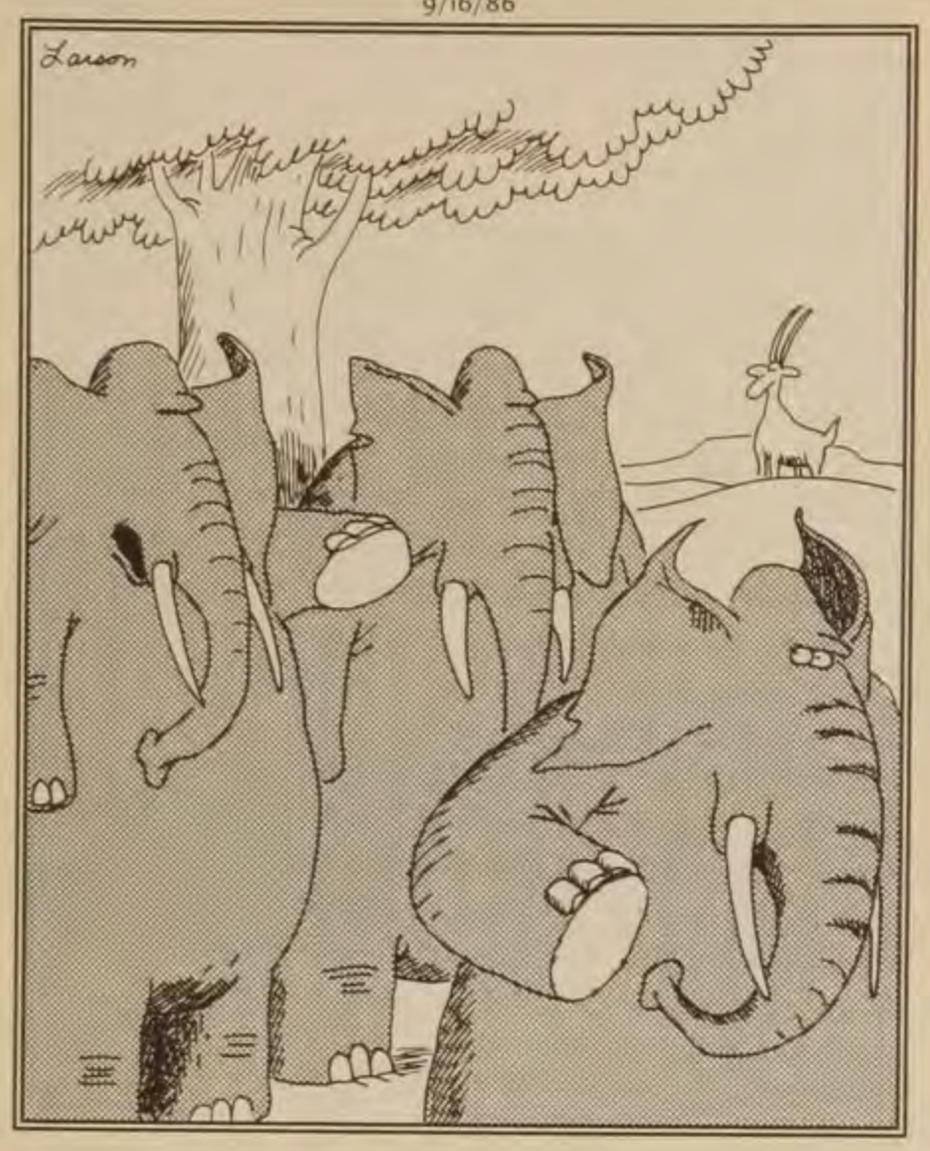


Only they know the difference.

9/19/86

Early chemists describe the first dirt molecule.

9/16/86

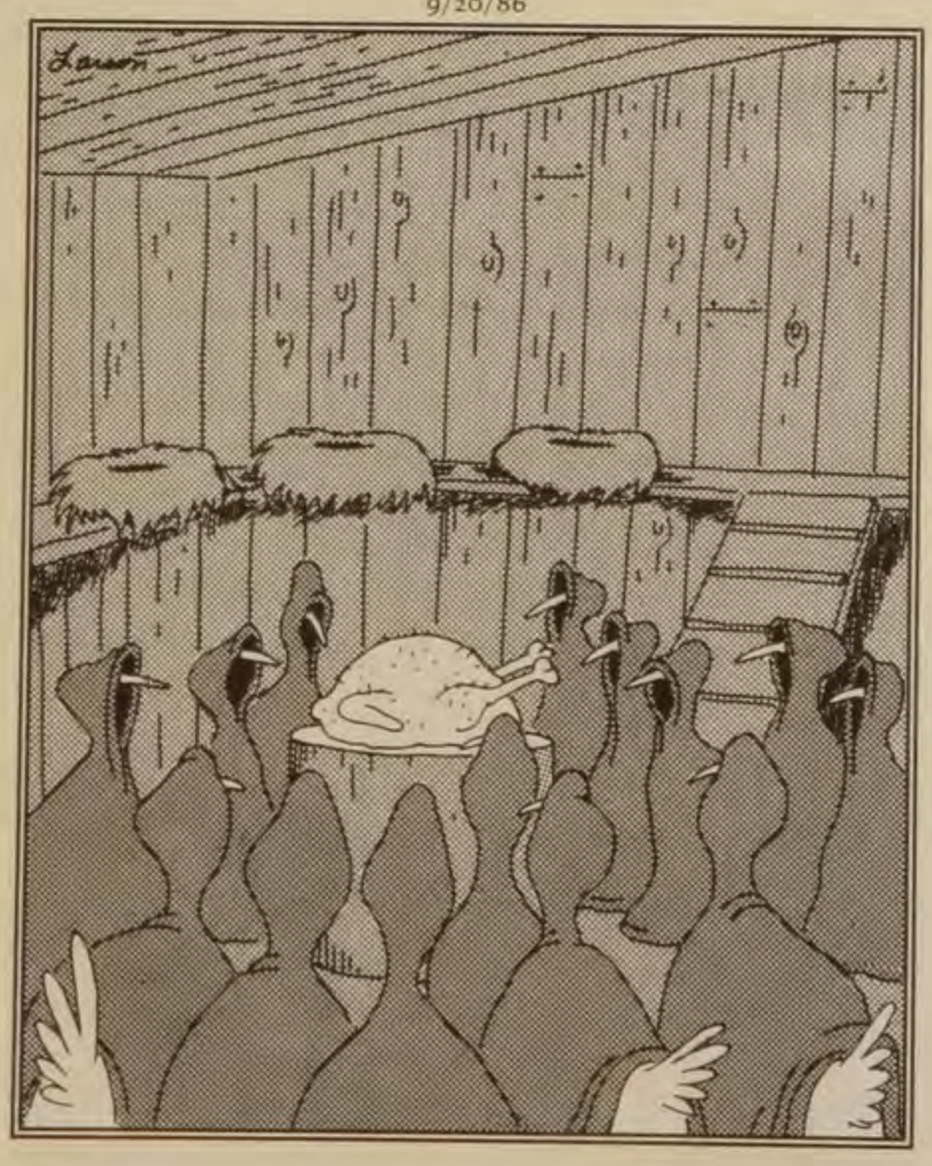


"You can run, Thomas, but you can't hide."

9/18/86

The door swung wide, and there, to the horror of the other pirates, stood Captain Monet—unmistakable with his one eye and pegbody.

9/20/86



Chicken cults

9/27/86

Venom pushers

September 1986

9/21/86

9/29/86

"Of course, long before you mature, most of you will be eaten."

9/30/86

Seconds later, Mrs. Norton was covered with ink.

September 1986

9/22/86

Inadvertently, Roy dooms the entire earth to annihilation when, in an attempt to be friendly, he seizes their leader by the head and shakes vigorously.

9/23/86

"Well, wouldn't you know it—we've come all this way to our favorite beach and someone's strung chicken wire around it."

9/24/86

God as a kid tries to make a chicken in his room.

9/25/86

"Ooo! This is always amusing. ... Here comes Bessie inside her plastic cow ball."

9/28/86

UPS/AMP MEMO

To: Lee Salem

From: John F. McNeel

Date: October 1, 1986

Subject:

☐ For Your Information:

☐ Action Needed By:

☐ For Further Discussion:

Jack Loftis, of the Houston CHRONICLE, called regarding the term "screw" which appeared in last Sunday's FAR SIDE release. They have had over fifty phone calls protesting the use of the term. Jack said that according to the dictionary the word "screw" means sexual intercourse. I asked him if he wanted a letter, he said no, he just wanted to tell the reader the truth, that he had relayed their protest and that of the CHRONICLE'S to the syndicate and hopefully the creator.

John

9/26/86

"Go back to sleep, Chuck. You're just havin' a nightmare—of course, we *are* still in hell."

UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

4900 Main Street • Kansas City, Missouri 64112 • Phone 816/932-6600

October 13, 1986

Jack Loftis
Assistant Editor
The Houston Chronicle
801 Texas Street
Houston, TX 77002

Dear Jack:

My, but your readers are single-minded! "To copulate" is but one of a number of definitions of "screw." The OED gives others, non-vulgar, definitions, as does our Webster's. Besides, you can't copulate with a "limit."

Best personal regards.

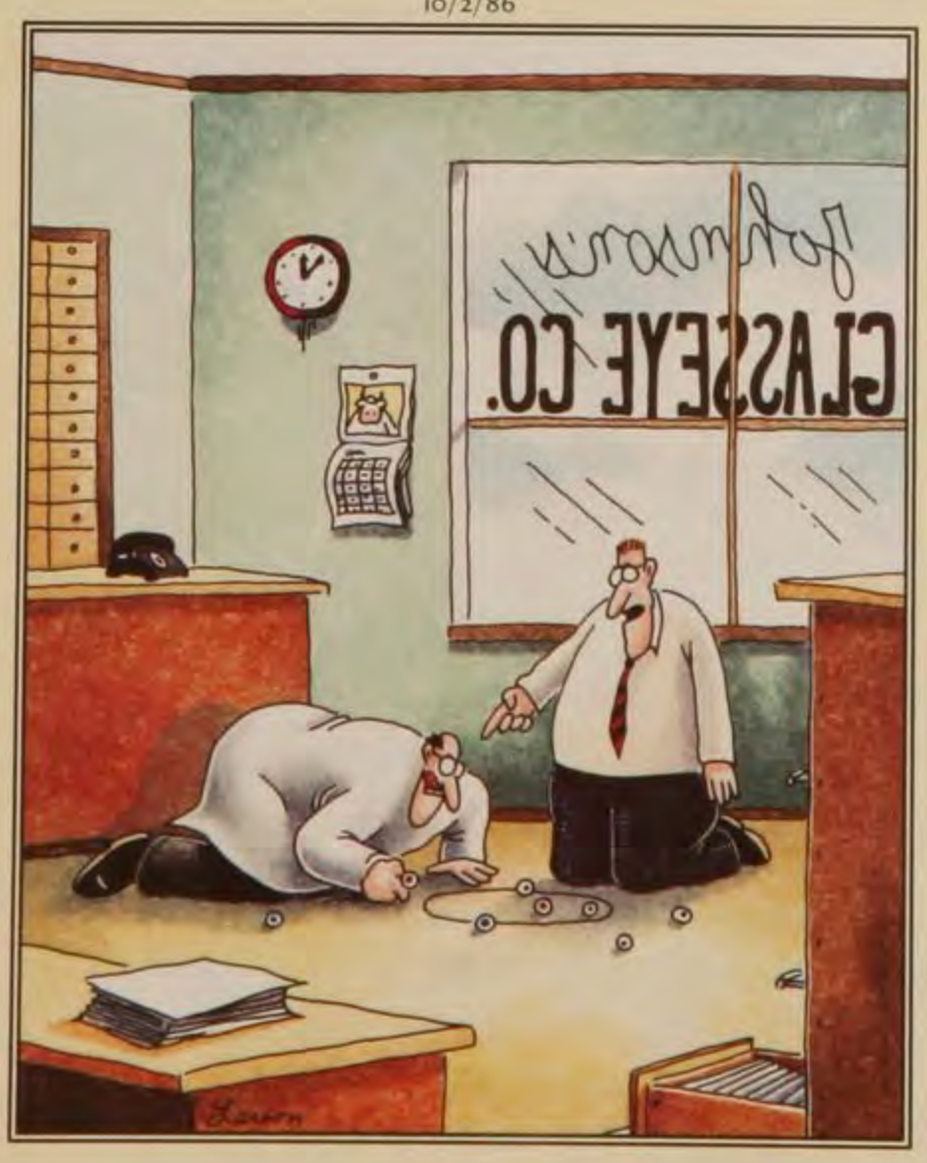
Sincerely,

Lee Salem
Editorial Director

October 1986

Suddenly, the living room was flooded with light and the angry sounds of an engine being revved. And everyone knew: The cat was back.

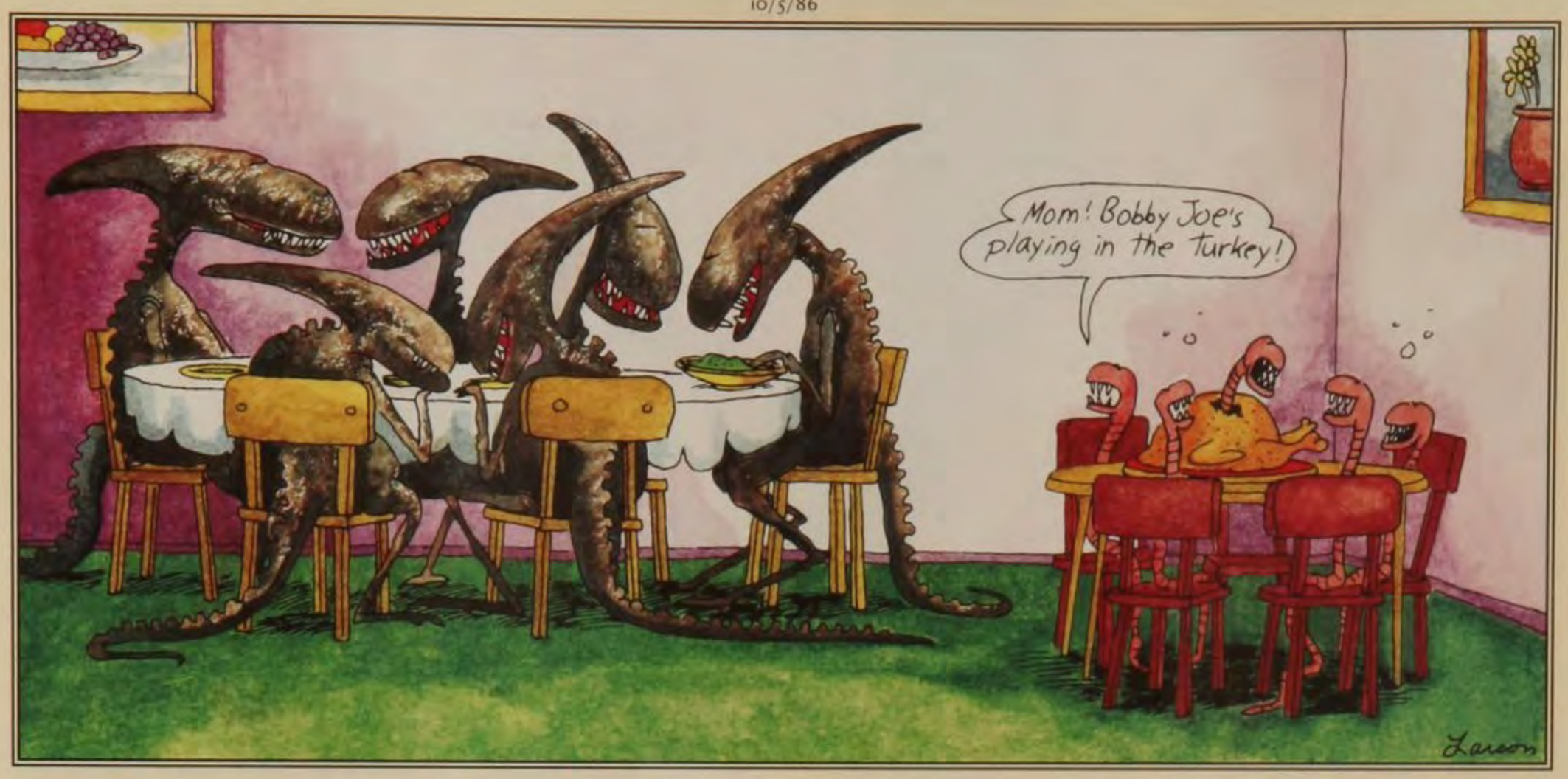
"Uh-oh. ... The Beaumonts' mouth is on fire."



"Just a word of warning, Myron—if you miss, I'm comin' after your big hazel."

"Raised the ol' girl from a cub, I did. ... 'Course, we had to get a few things straight between us. She don't try to follow me into town anymore, and I don't try and take her food bowl away till she's done."

10/5/86



Alien family dinners

10/8/86

"Ha! Figured you might try escapin', Bert—so I just took the liberty of removin' your horse's brain."

10/7/86

Auditions for the Lone Ranger's horse

October 1986

10/9/86

"And now that's the last of that."

10/6/86

"Say, ain't you a stranger in this part?"

10/11/86

"Ringworm around the collar ... Ringworm around the collar!"

10/13/86

"Primordial soup again?"

October 1986

10/12/86

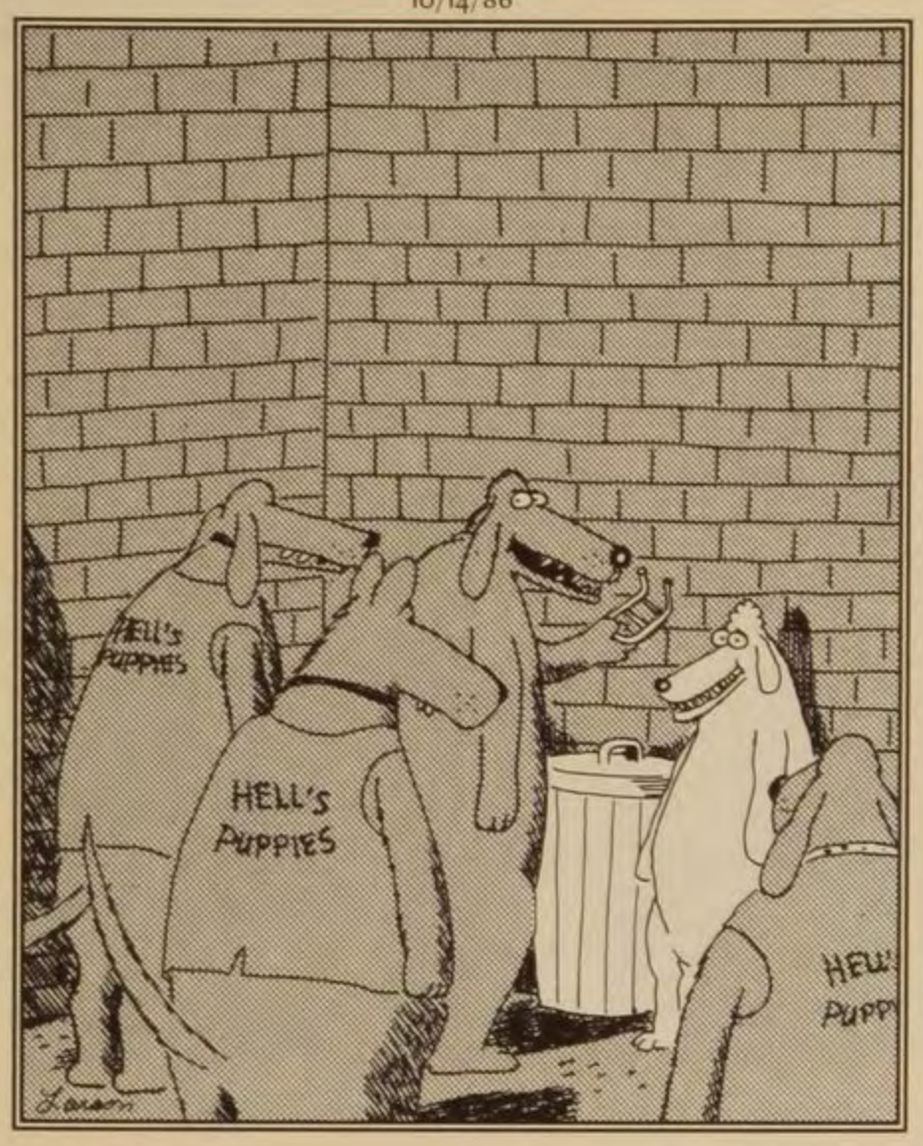
10/18/86

"You wanna have some fun, Fred? Watch. ... Growling and bristling, I'm gonna stand in front of the closet door and just stare."

10/10/86

October 1986

10/14/86



"Well, whatta y'know, boys. All this time Mr. Tough Dog here was just wearing one of these fake-a-snarl contraptions."

10/16/86

Treehouse nightmare

10/15/86

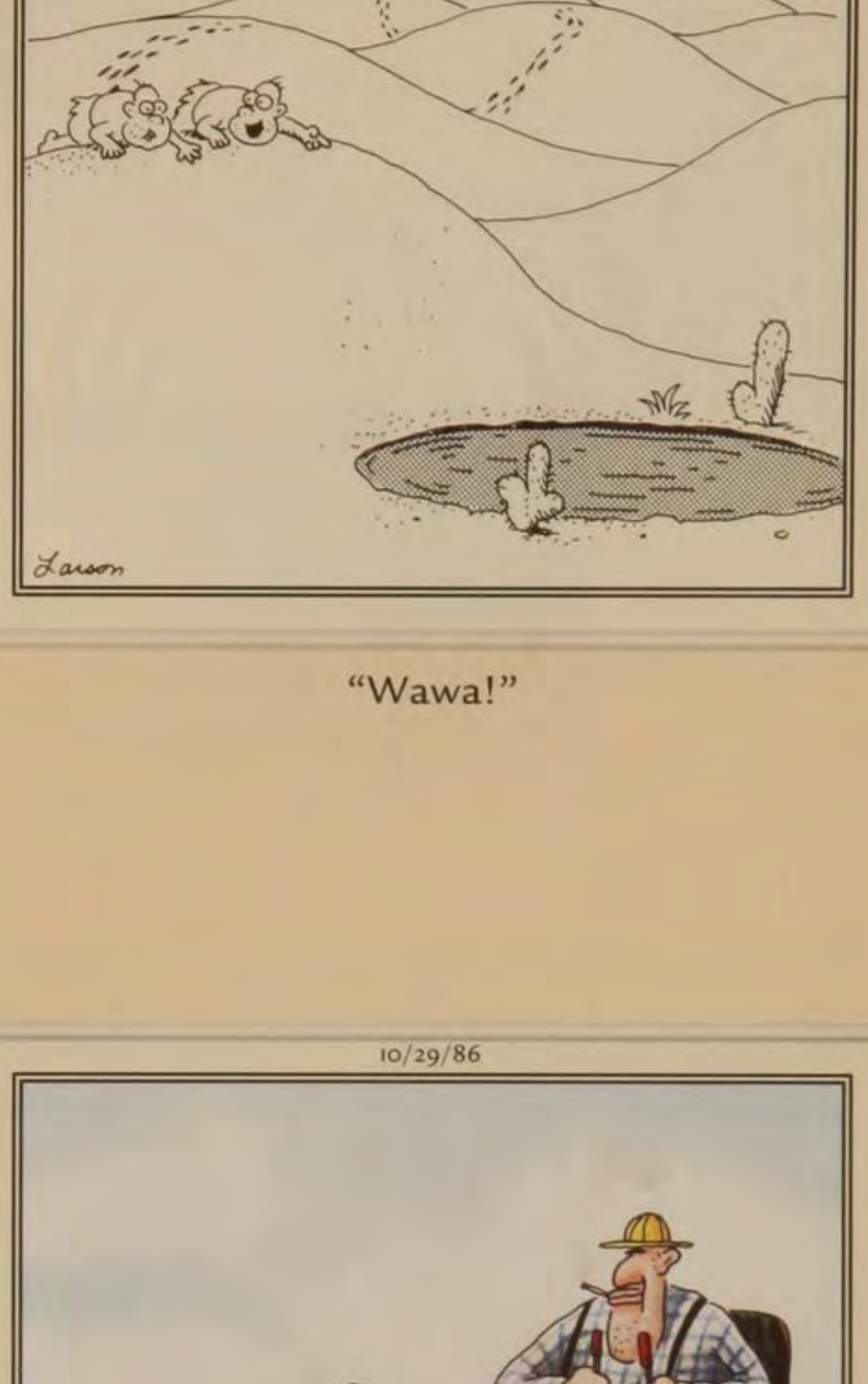
Washington crossing the street

October 1986

"Hey! C'mon, Jed! ... Ease up on them hammers!"

"Wawa!"

"Randy! Just sit down, eat your cereal, and look for that thing later!"



The Pillsbury Doughboy meets Frank's Asphalt and Concrete Paving Service.

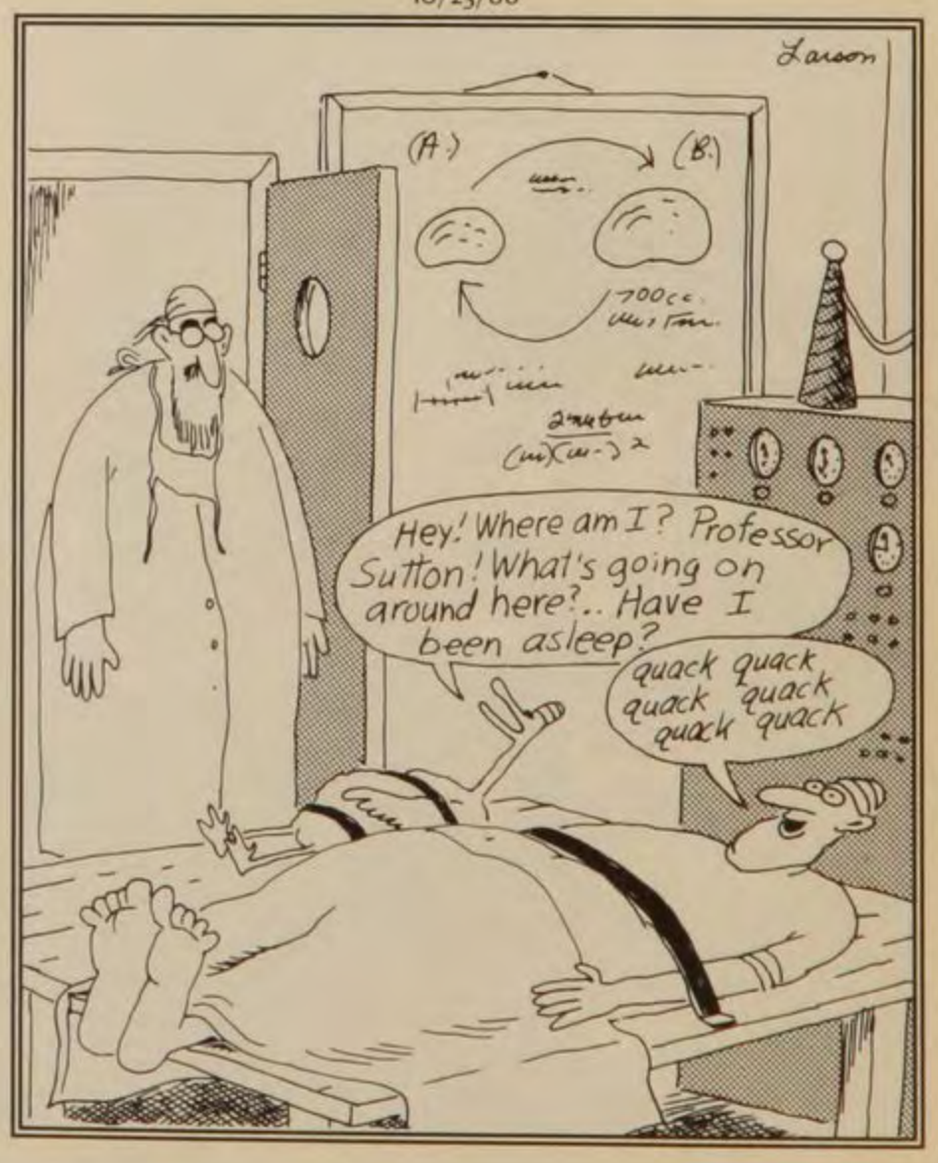
October 1986

10/19/86

10/21/86

"Again? What is it with you that as soon as you put one fin on the land you have to go?"

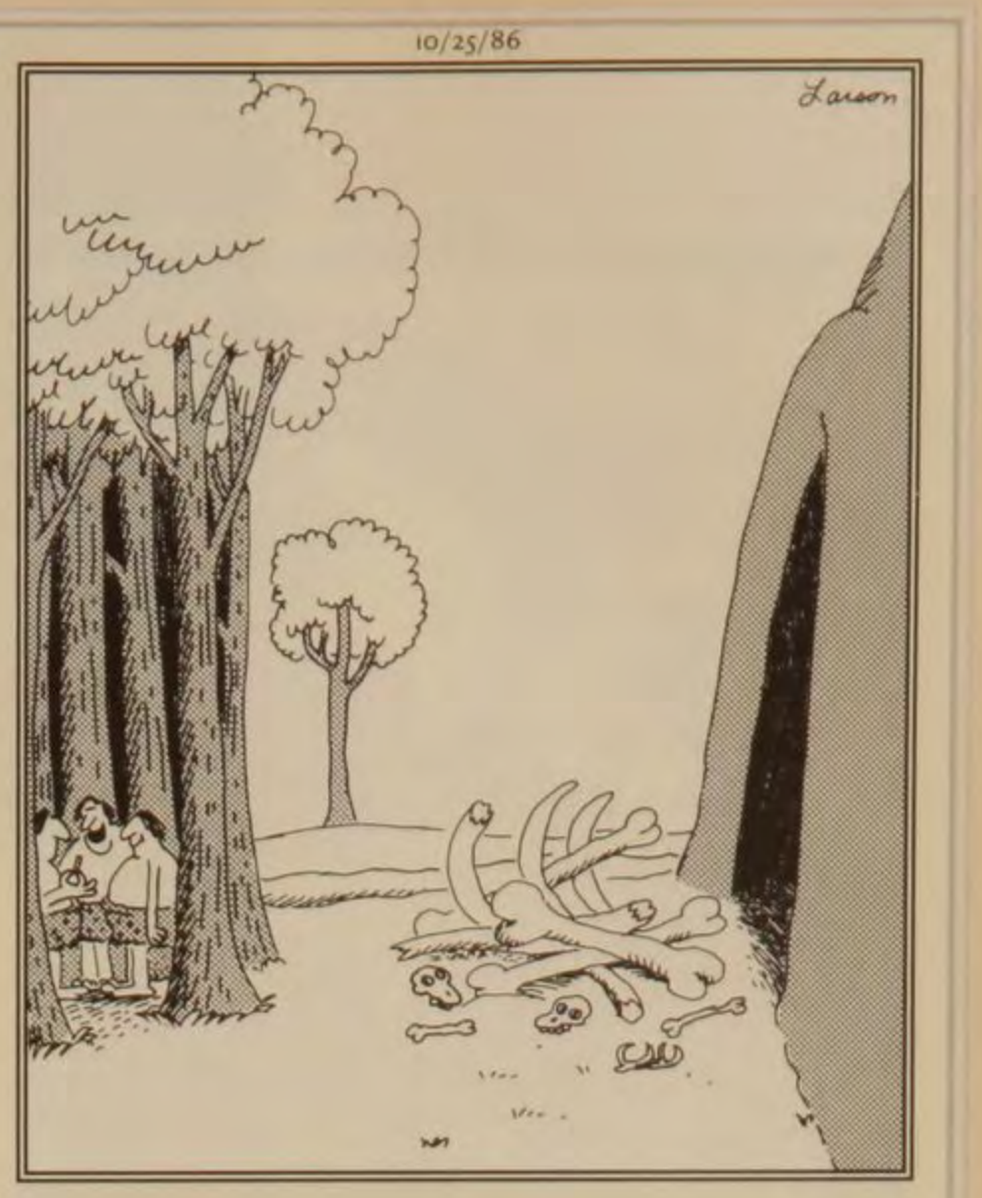
10/23/86



The operation was a success: Later, the duck, with his new human brain, went on to become the leader of a great flock. Irwin, however, was ostracized by his friends and family and eventually just ambled south.

October 1986

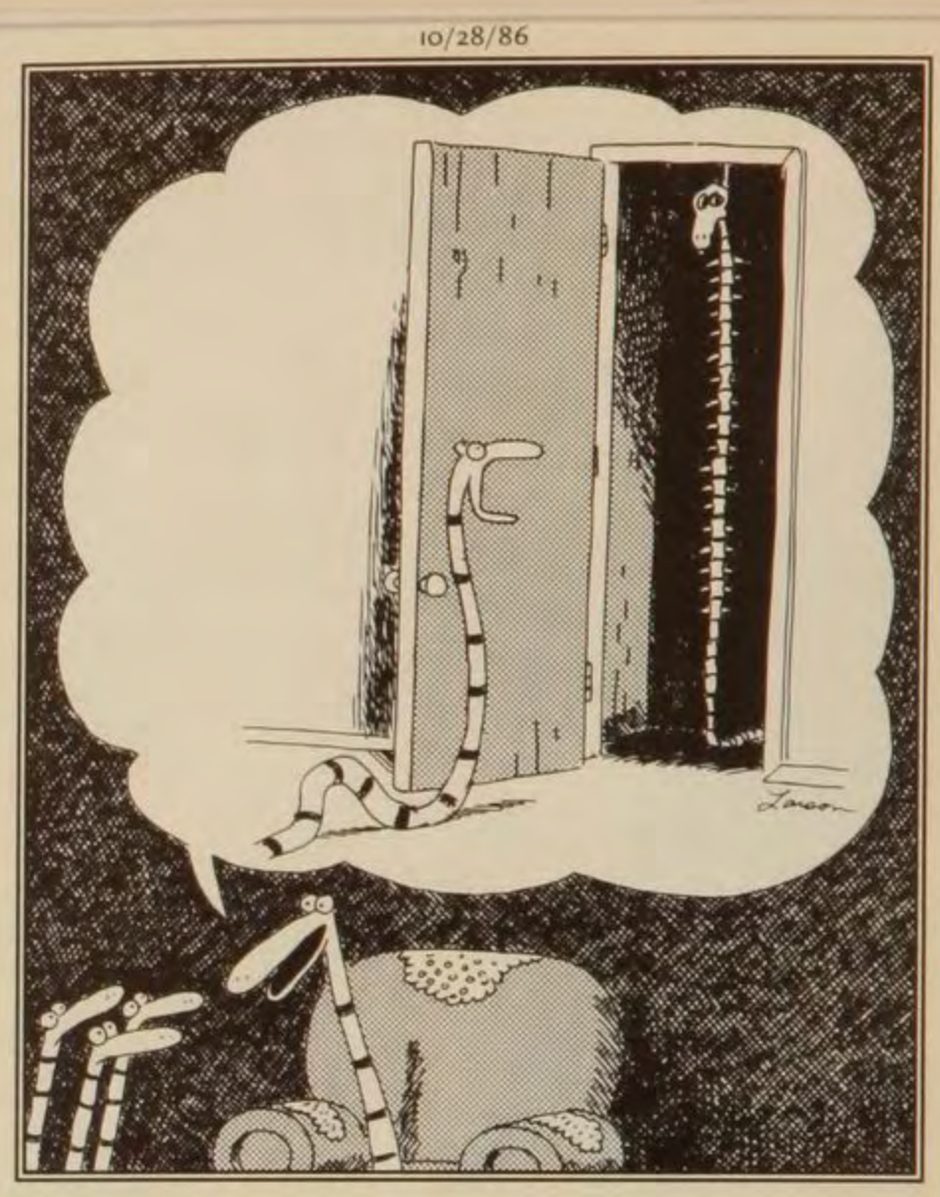
"What can you do for my neck?"



"Ha! Thak get short straw! ... Thak go see if Zog still live here."

10/27/86

10/28/86



Snake horror stories

10/30/86

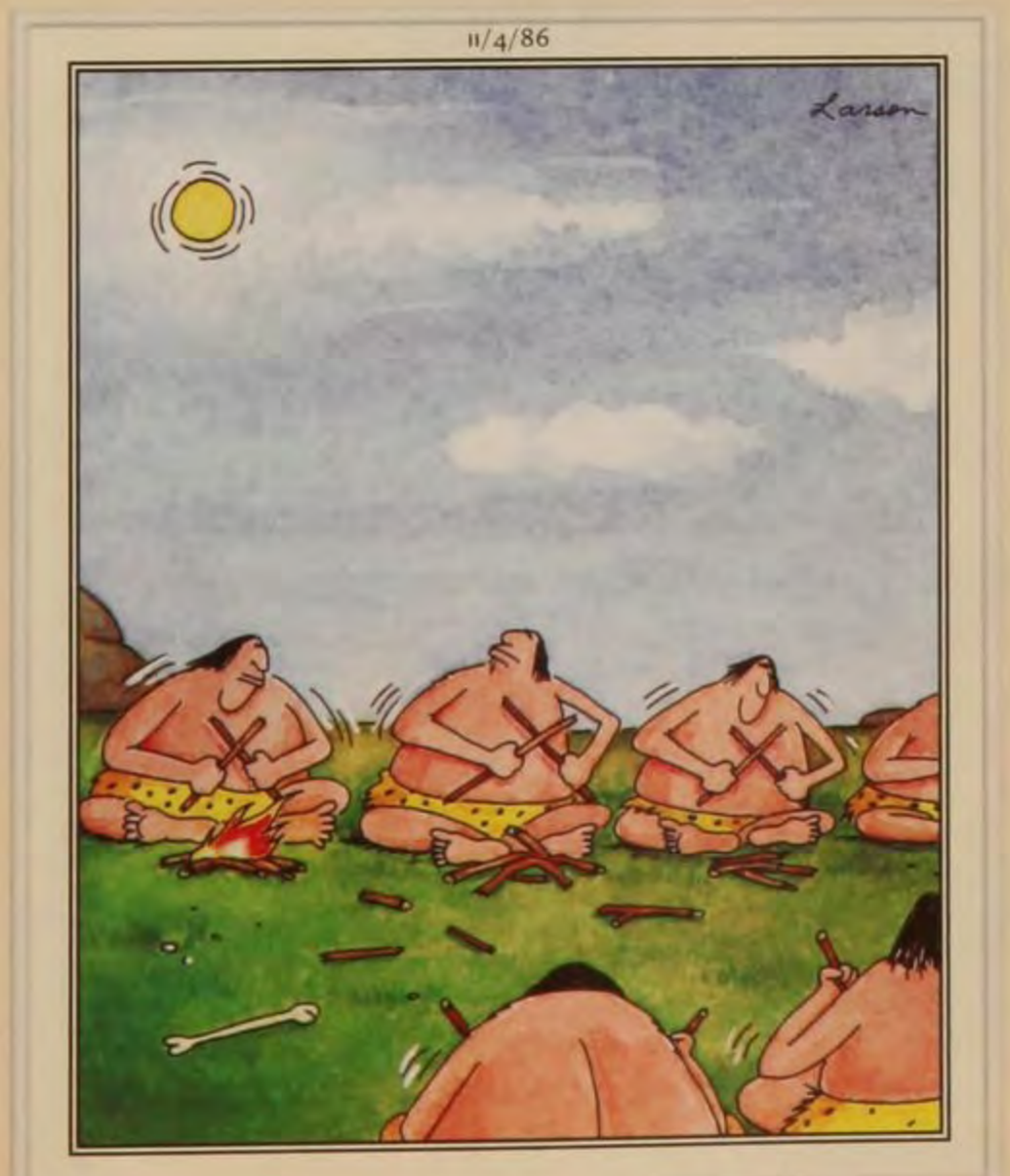
10/31/86

"Boy, he even looks like a drowned rat."

November 1986

Airplane mimicry

Classroom afflictions



Early clock-watchers

"Up! Up! Bring me up!"

November 1986

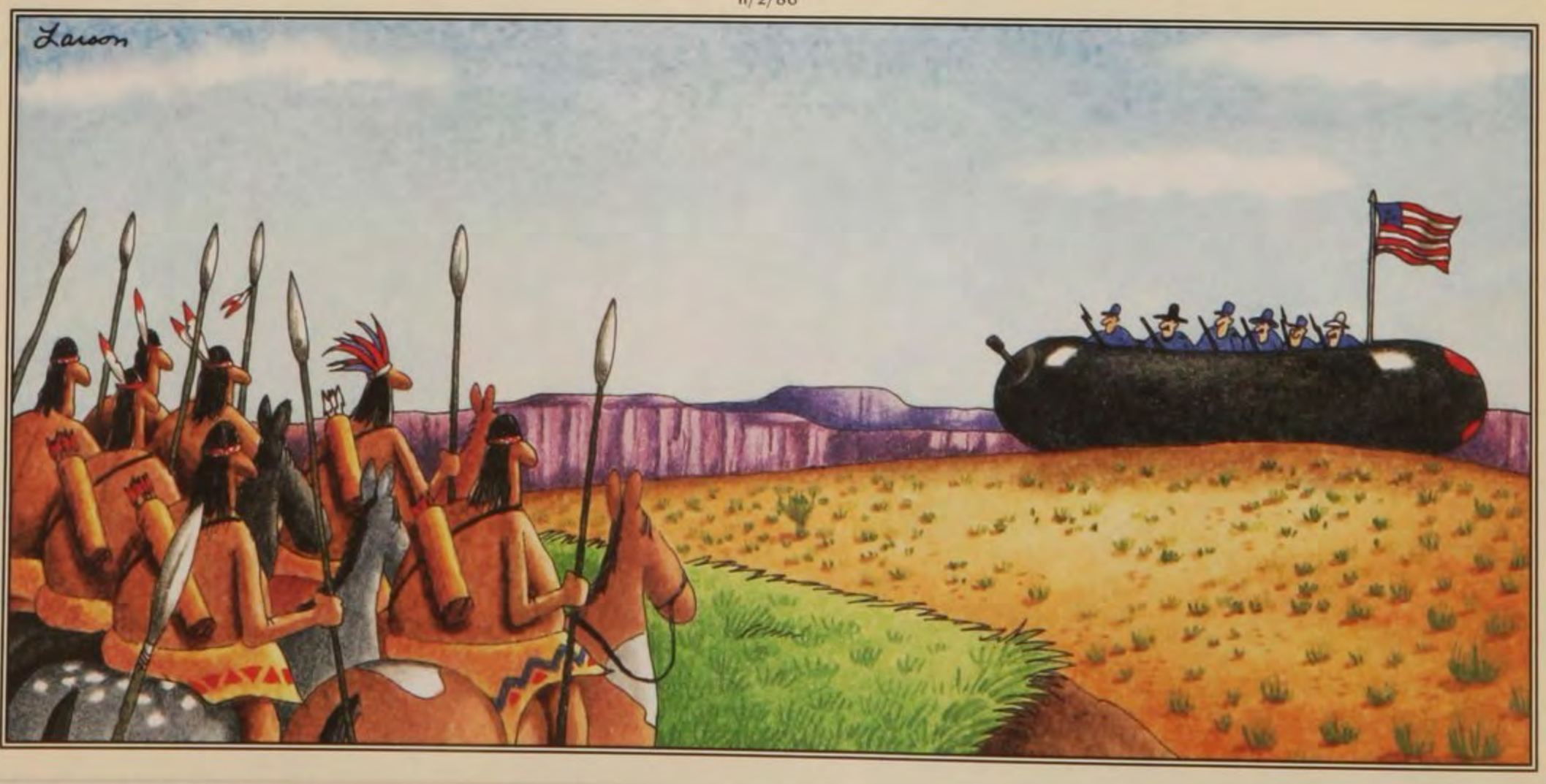
11/6/86

Business lunch

11/7/86

Robby works his ant farm.

11/2/86



The short-lived fiasco of the inflatable fort

November 1986

"My boy made the frame."

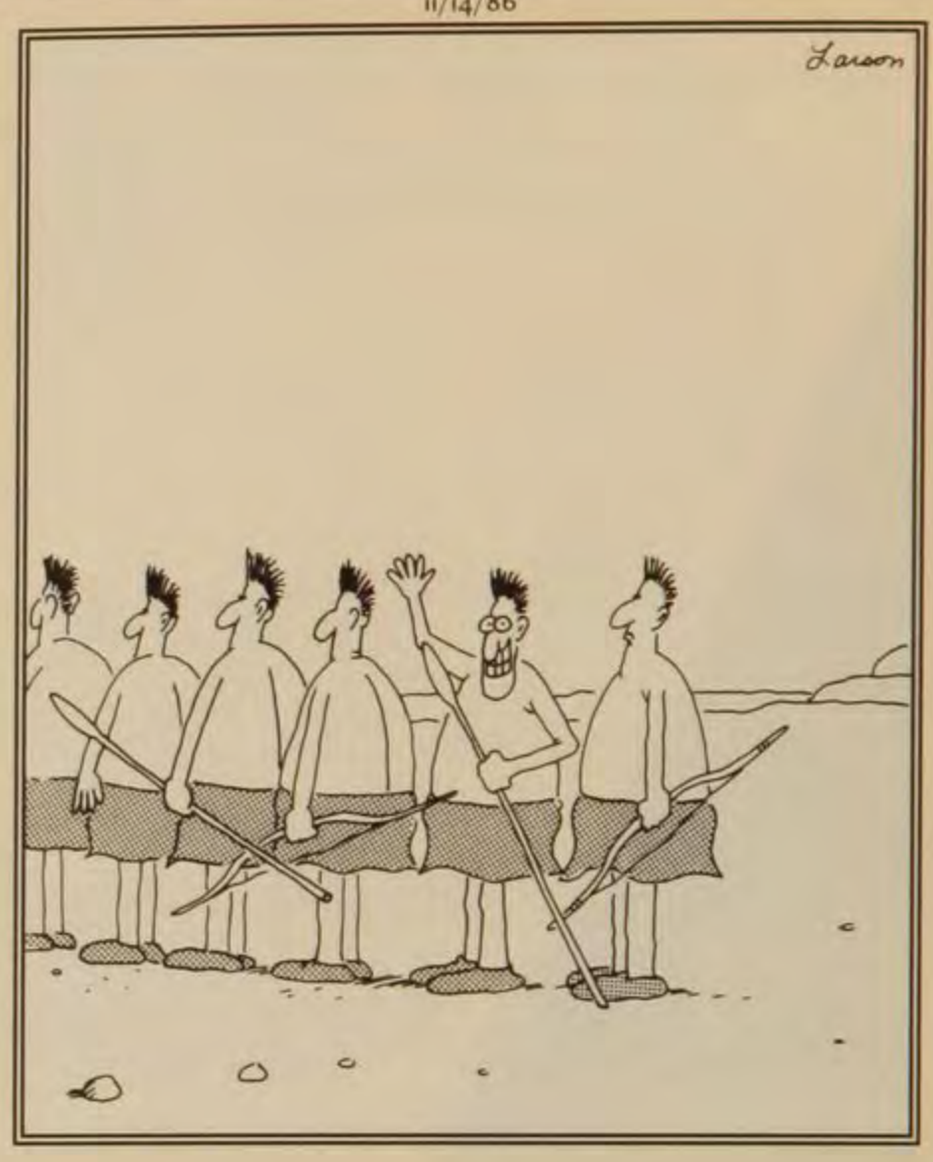
"Hold it! There's a car across the street—you sure you weren't followed, Mary?"

November 1986

11/11/86

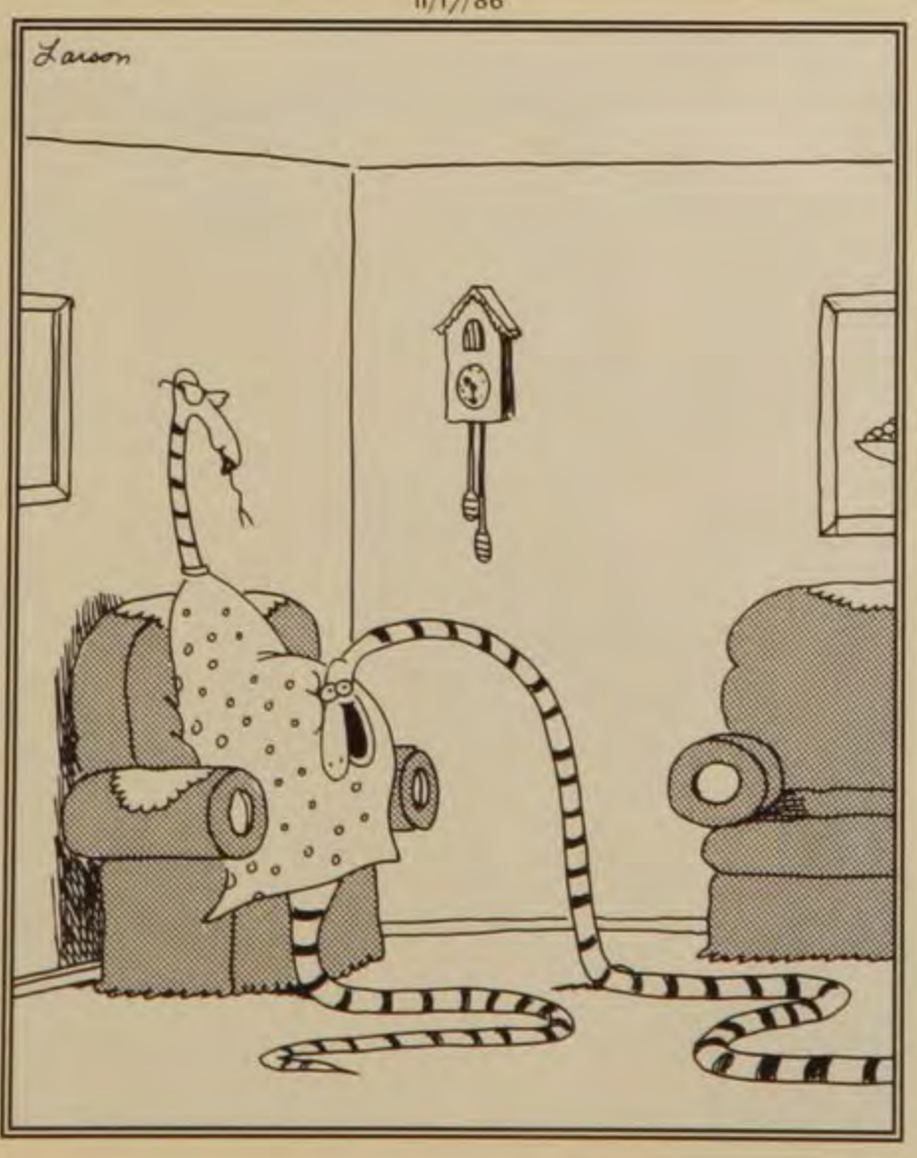
"So, Carl—attacked by any giant carrots lately?"

11/14/86



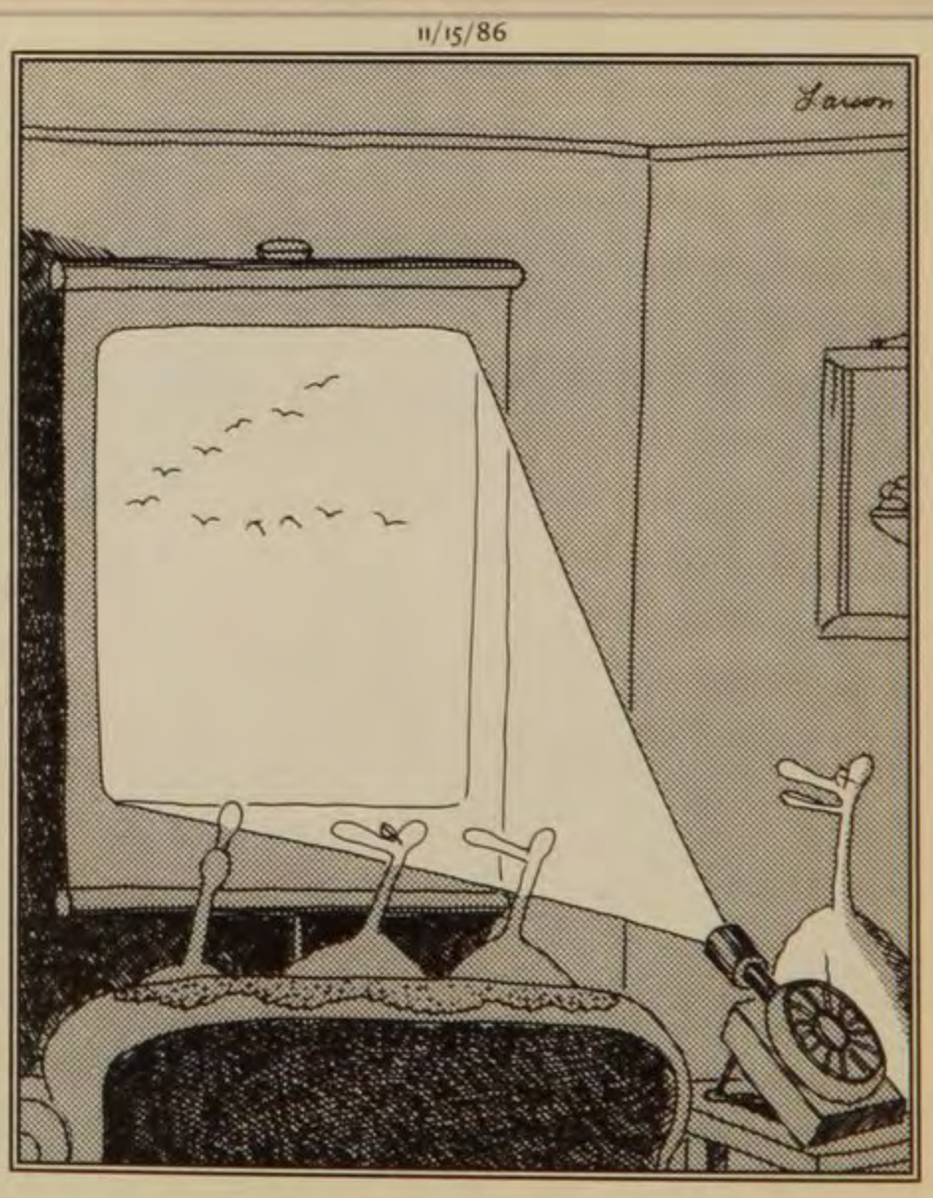
Second to the last of the Mohicans

11/17/86



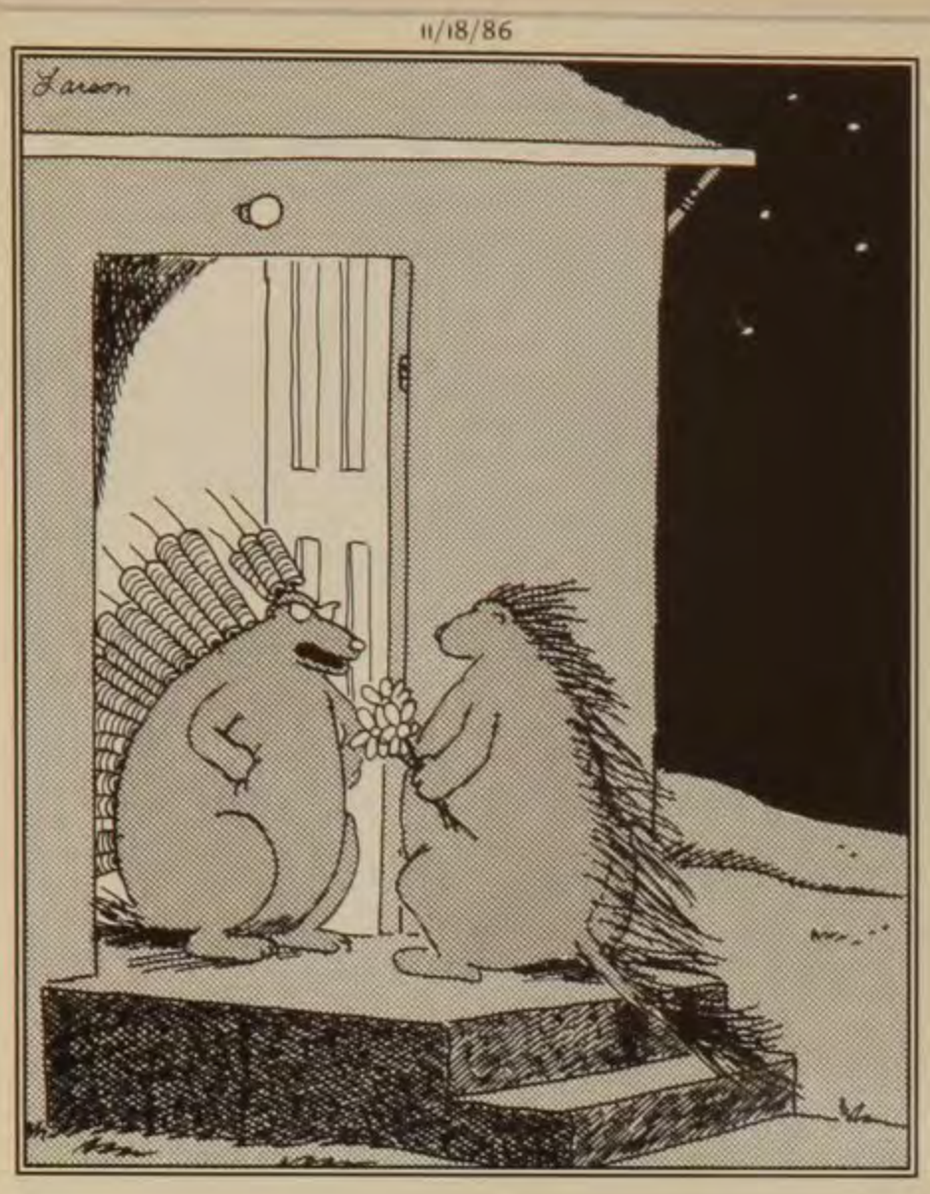
"I hear 'em! ... Gee, there must be a *hundred* of the little guys squirmin' around in there!"

11/15/86



"And here we are last summer going south. ... Wait a minute, Irene! We went *north* last summer! The stupid slide's in backwards!"

November 1986



"Oh, wonderful—you're early."

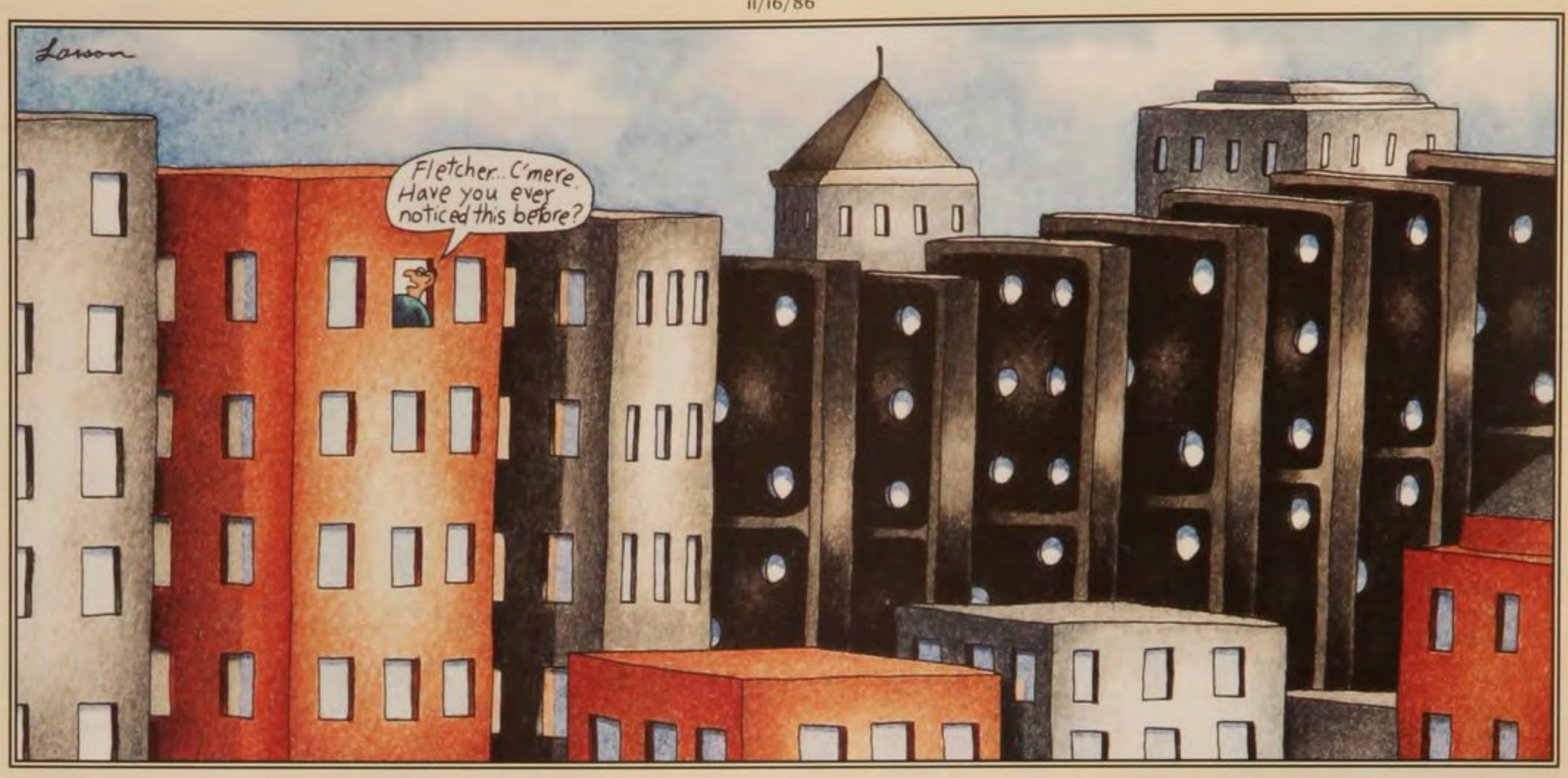
Tantor burns up on I-90.

"It's 'Them,' gentlemen."

At the Strategic Pie Limitation Talks

November 1986

11/16/86



11/12/86

11/13/86

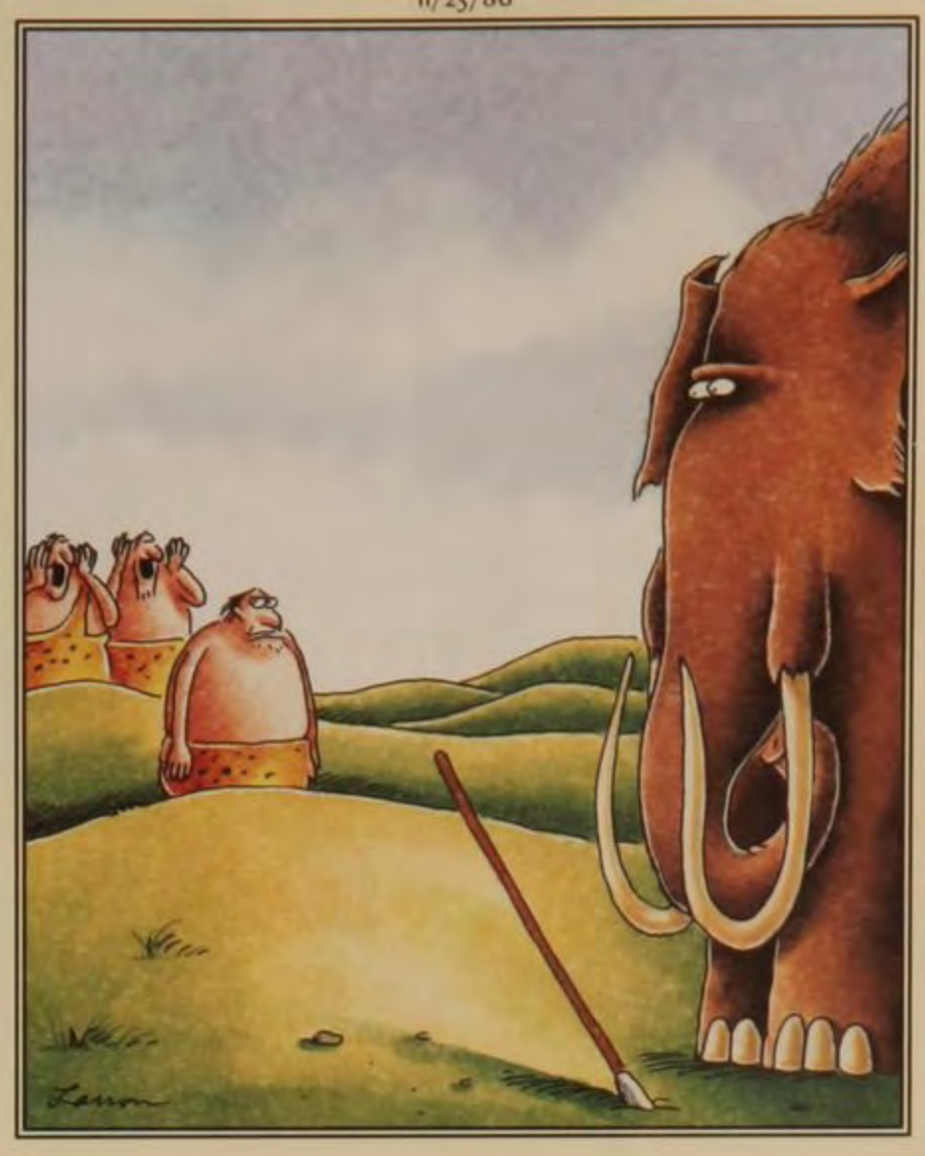
"And this report just in—apparently, the grass *is* greener on the other side."

November 1986

11/19/86

"Give me a hand here, Etta ... I got into a nest of wiener dogs over on Fifth and Maple."

11/25/86

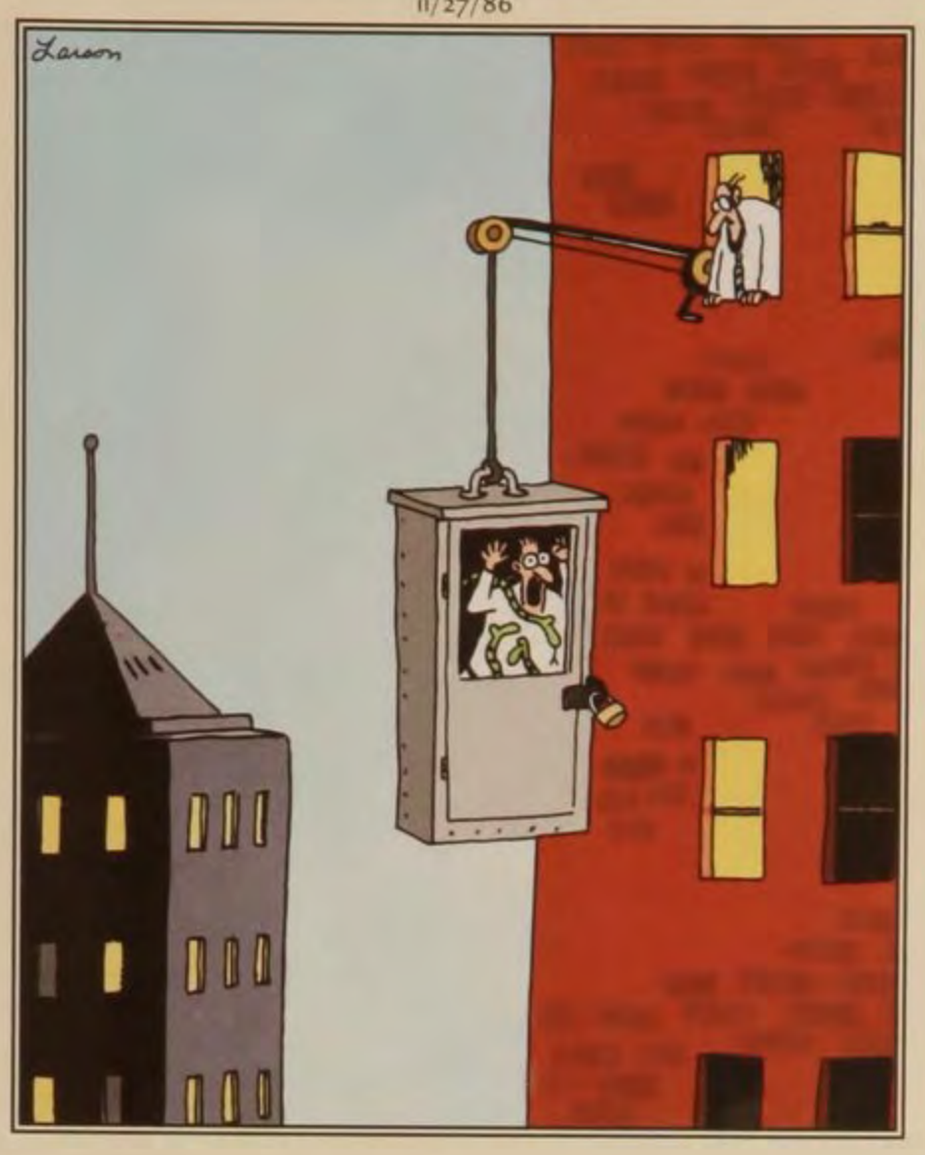


"Airrrrr spearrrr ... airrrrr spearrrr! ... "

11/23/86

November 1986

11/27/86

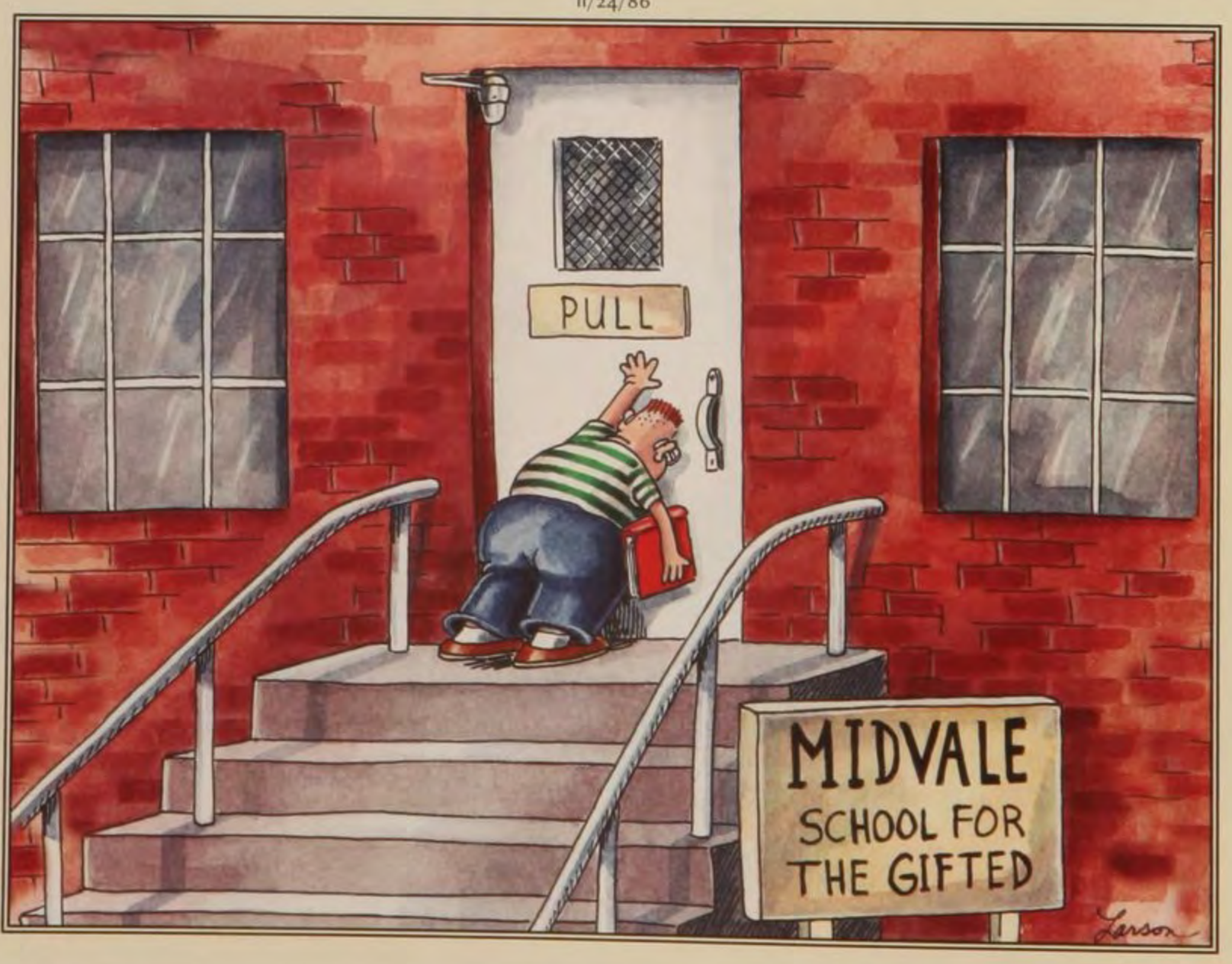


Professor Gallagher and his controversial technique of simultaneously confronting the fear of heights, snakes, and the dark.

11/22/86

"I tell you, a crib is just plain worthless—what we need around here is a good cardboard box."

11/24/86



November 1986

11/30/86

11/28/86

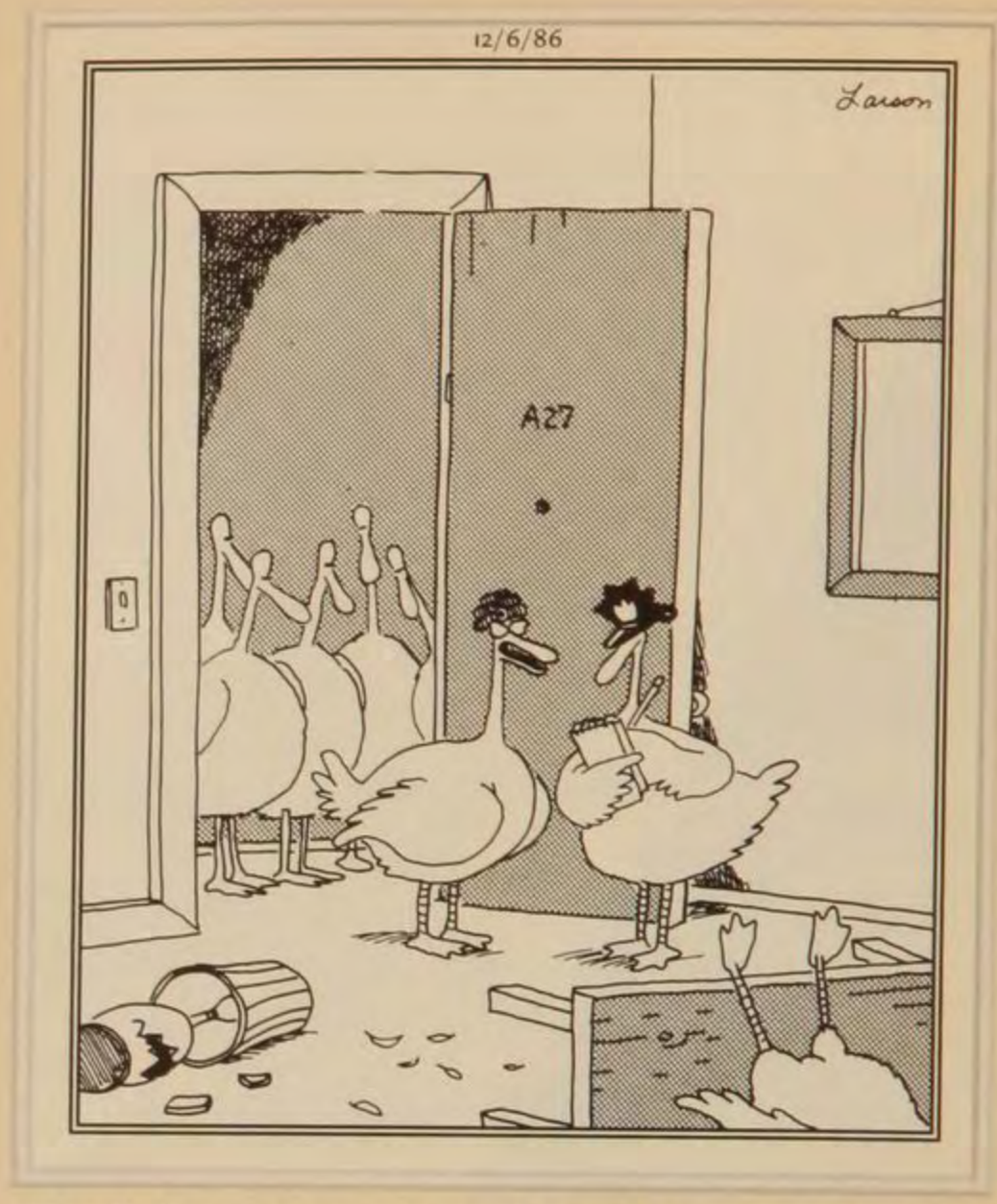
"Barbara! I'm going for help—tread soup!"

11/29/86

"Whoa! Watch where that thing lands—we'll probably need it."

December 1986

At a critical moment, Zak's club jams.



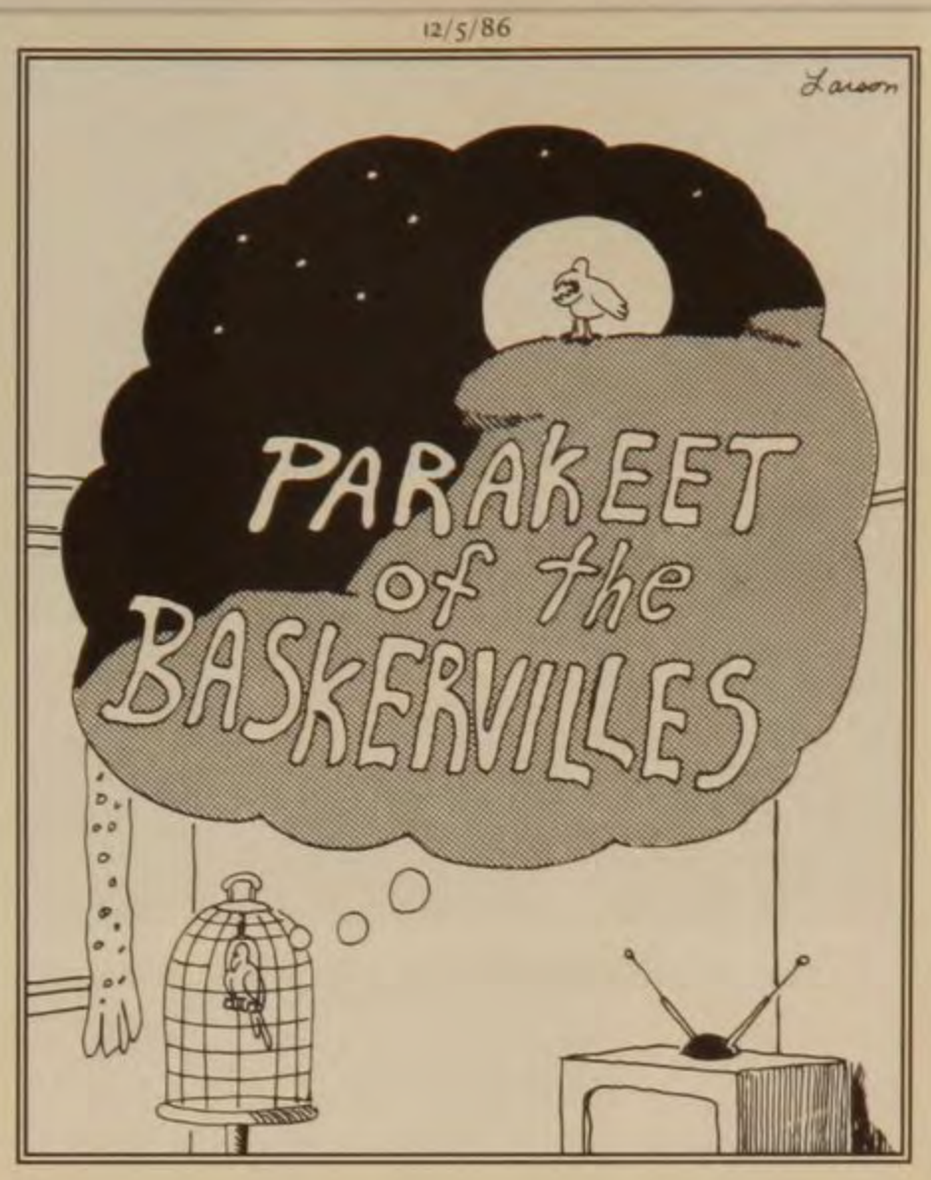
"Well, from across the hall I could hear this heated argument, followed by sounds of a scuffle. Suddenly, there was this tremendous, bloodcurdling 'quaaaaacck!' That's when I called."

"So, you're a *real* gorilla, are you? Well, guess you wouldn't mind munchin' down a few beetle grubs, would you? ... In fact, we wanna see you chug 'em!"

"Look. I'm sorry ... if you weighed 500 pounds, we'd certainly accommodate you—but it's simply a fact that a *400*-pound gorilla does *not* sleep anywhere he wants to."

December 1986

The world was going down the tubes. They needed a scapegoat. They found Wayne.



Buddy's dreams

Moby's parents

Bobbing for poodles

December 1986

12/7/86

Night of the Crash-Test Dummies

12/8/86

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but his license does check out and, after all, your husband *was* in season. Remember, just because he knocks doesn't mean you have to let him in."

12/10/86

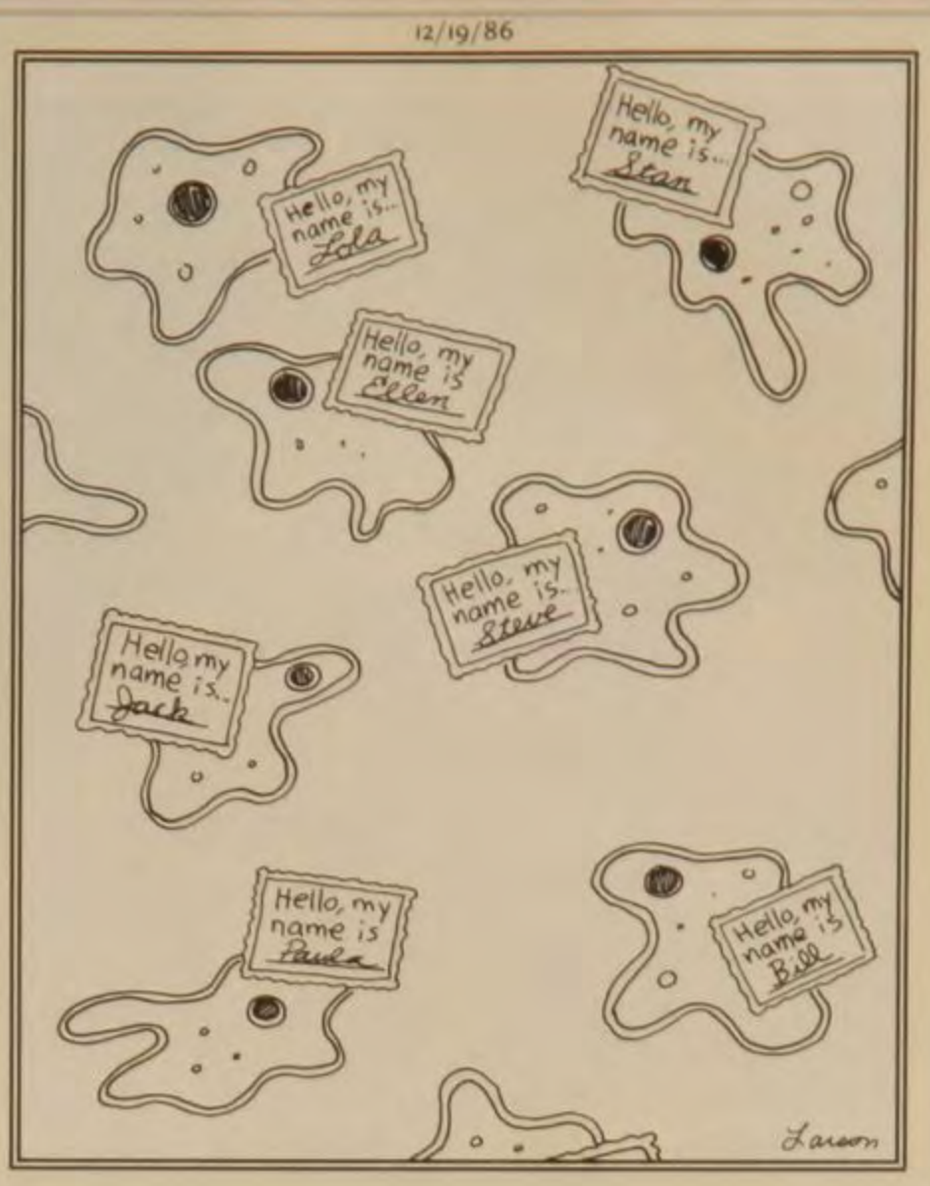
And for two excruciating months, he was simply known as "Skinhead of the Jungle."

December 1986

12/12/86

When snakes dream they're crawling

12/19/86



Amoeba conventions

12/11/86

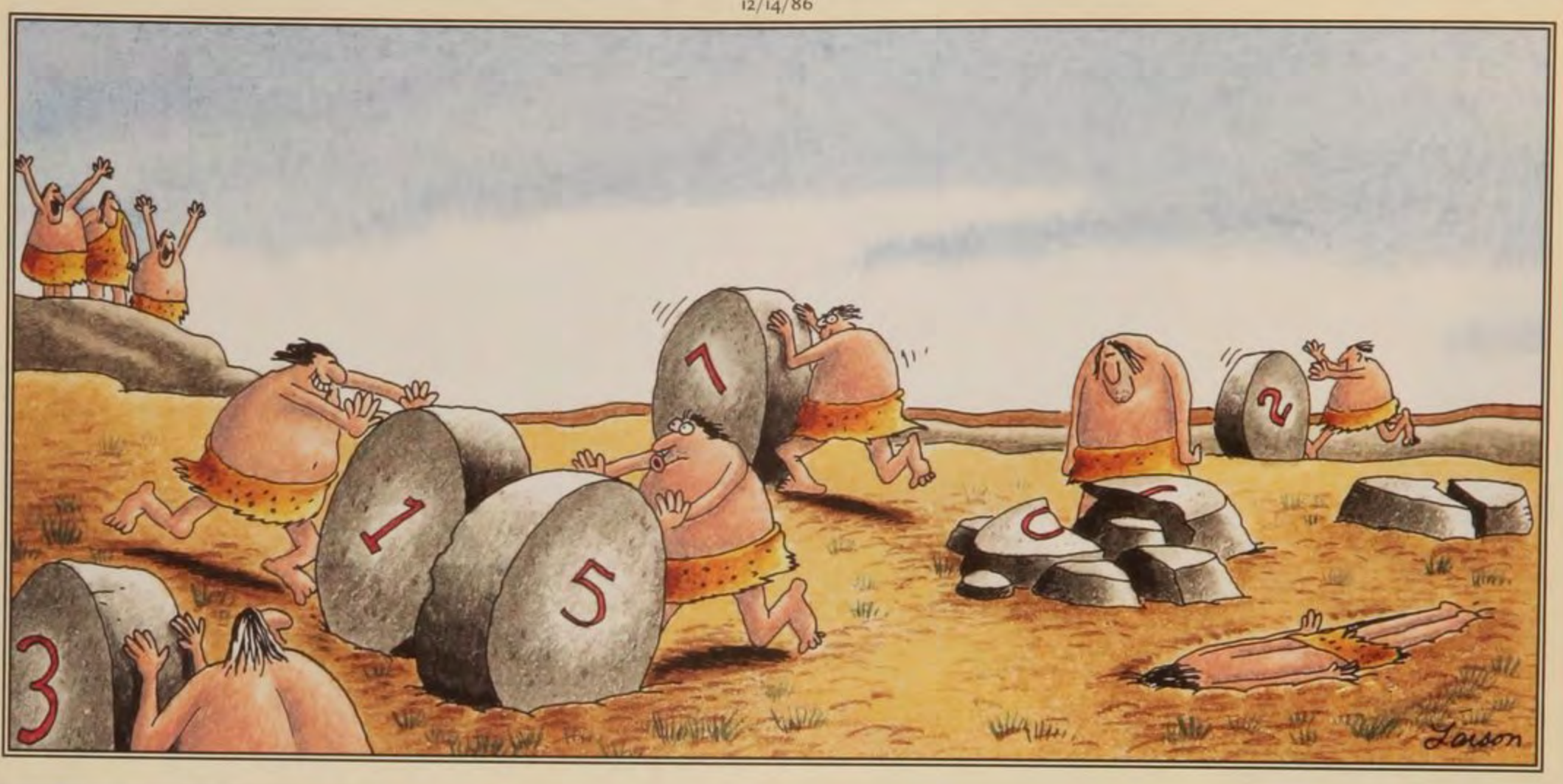
"YO! FARMER DAVE! LET'S GO, LET'S GO, LET'S GO! ... YOU GETTIN' UP WITH US CHICKENS OR NOT?"

12/15/86

"Sorry to bother you, sir, but there's another salesman out here—you want me to tell him to go to heaven?"

December 1986

12/14/86



Primitive demolition derbies

12/16/86

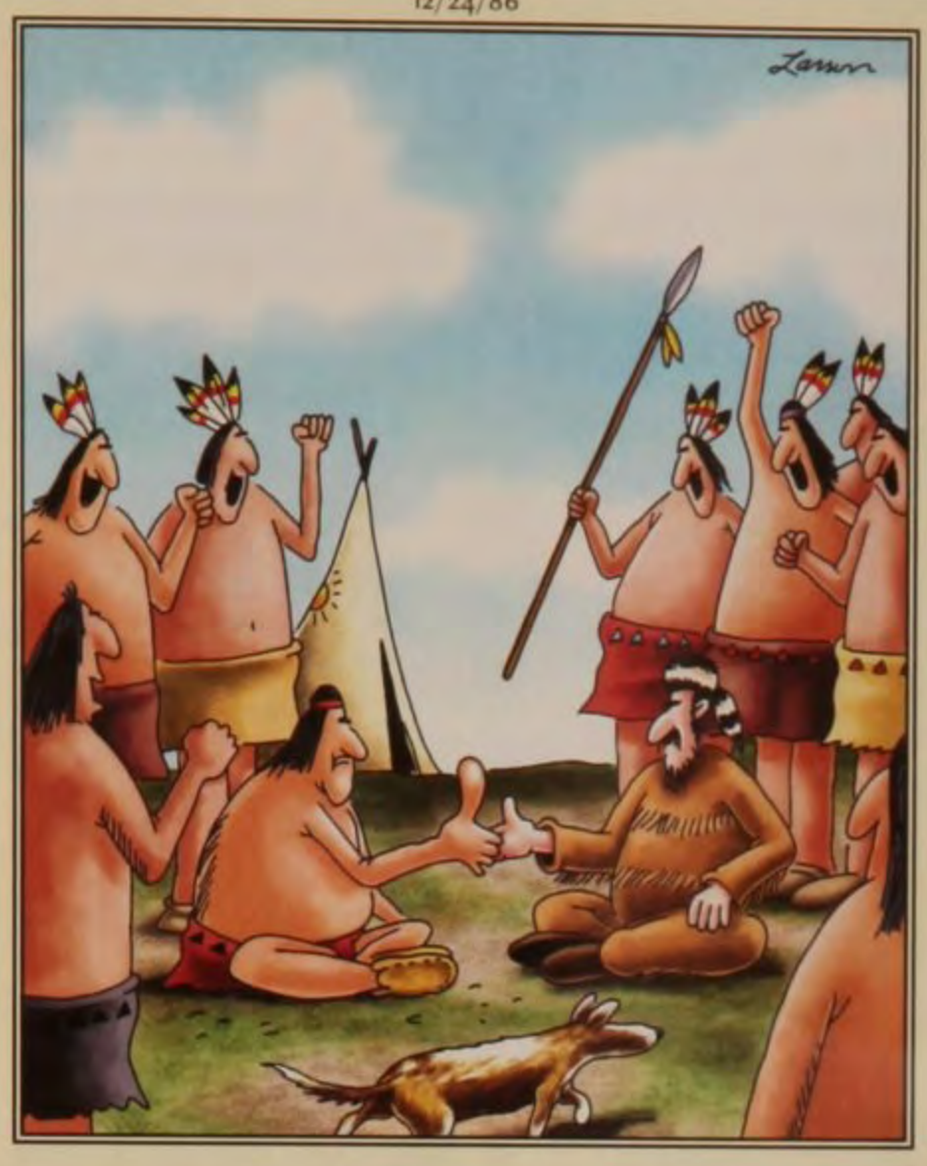
"How many times did I say it, Harold? How many times? 'Make sure that bomb shelter's got a can opener—ain't much good without a can opener,' I said."

12/17/86

"And another thing! I'm sick and tired of you callin' me 'new kid' all the time!"

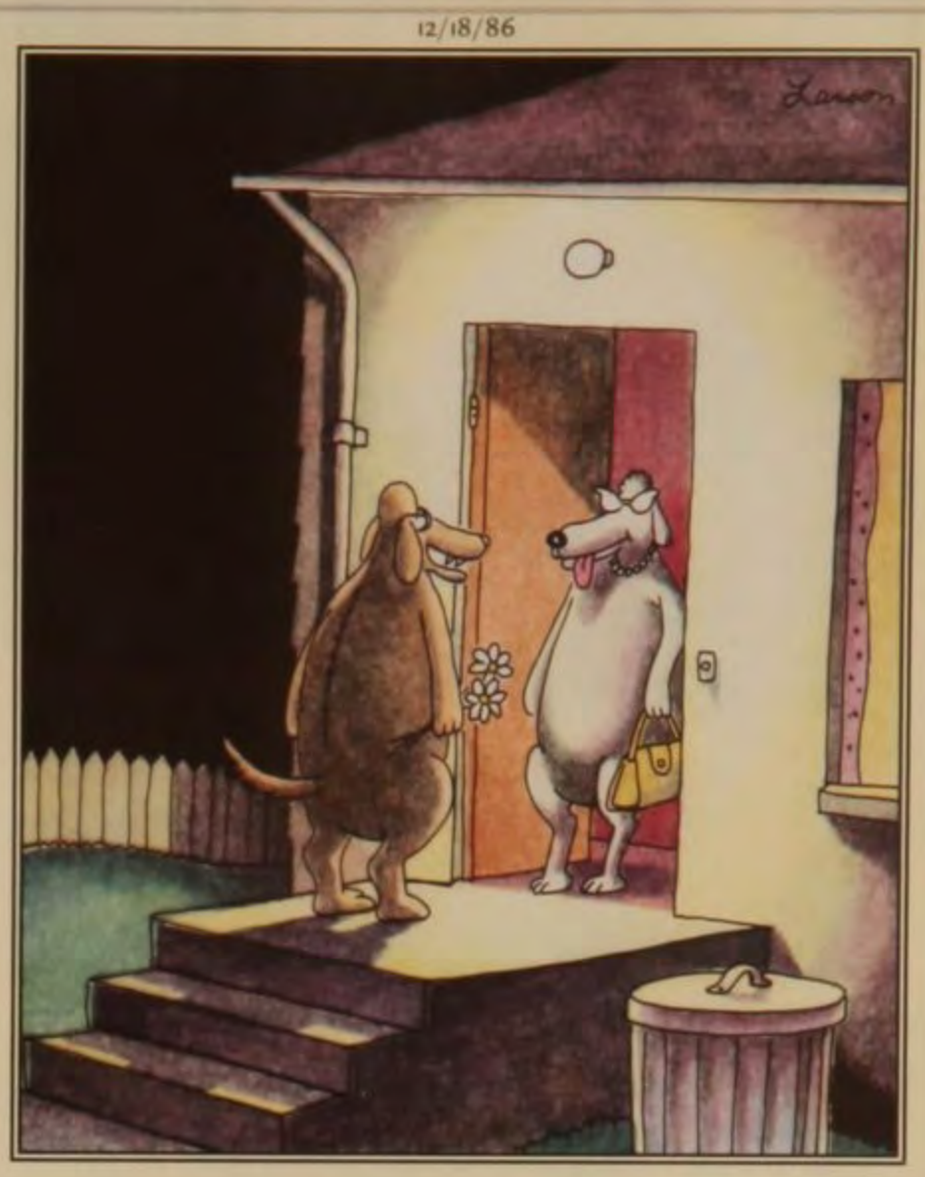
December 1986

12/24/86



To win the tribe's respect, Jed first had to defeat their best thumb-wrestler.

12/18/86



"Oh, Ginger—you look absolutely stunning ... and whatever you rolled in sure does stink."

12/21/86

December 1986

"Just think. ... Here we are, the afternoon sun beating down on us, a dead, bloated rhino underfoot, and good friends flying in from all over. ... I tell you, Frank, this is the best of times."

The Headless Horsefamily

Vern waited, hoping to God for one moment—one precious moment—when the herd would cluster together.

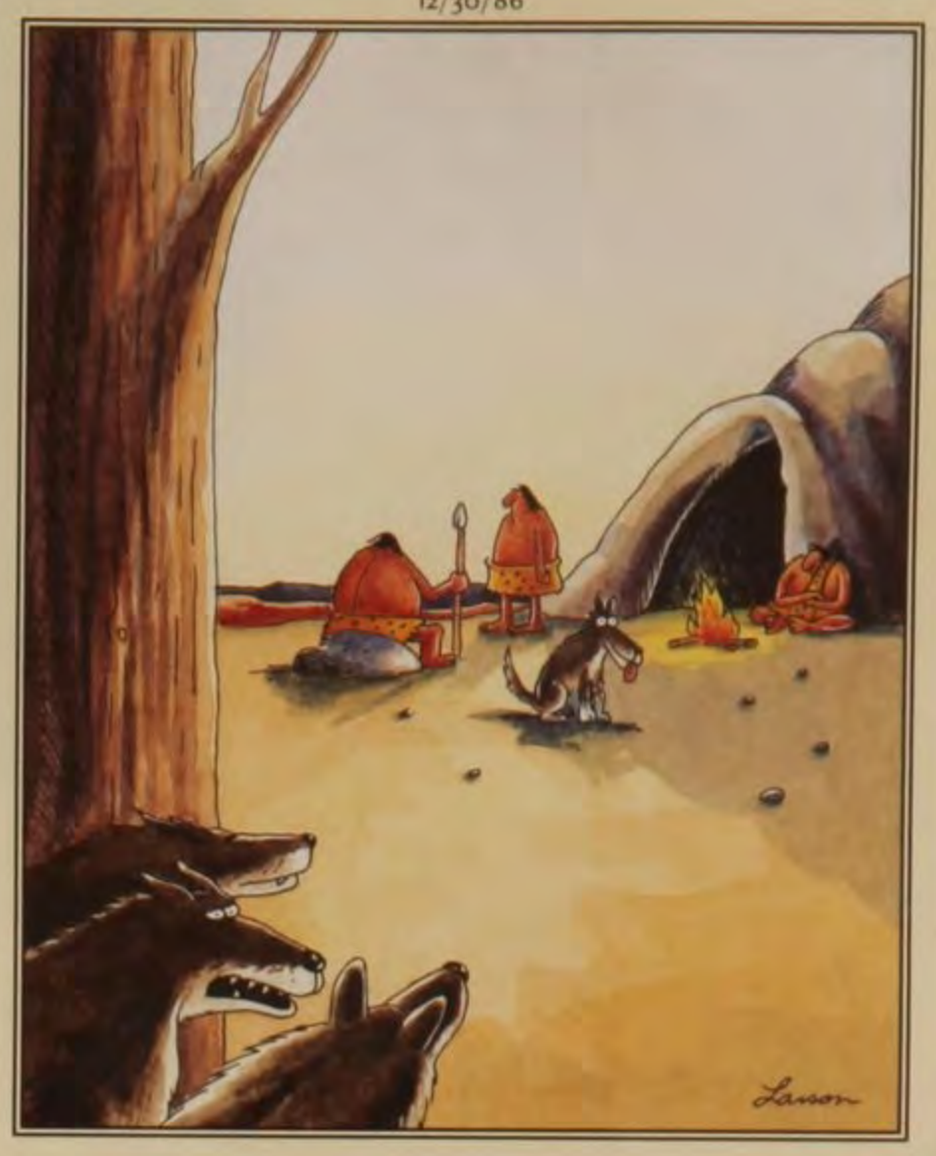
"Carl, maybe you should just leave your flashlight off. We're trying to scare these kids, not crack 'em up."

December 1986

12/25/86

The portrait of Dorian Cow

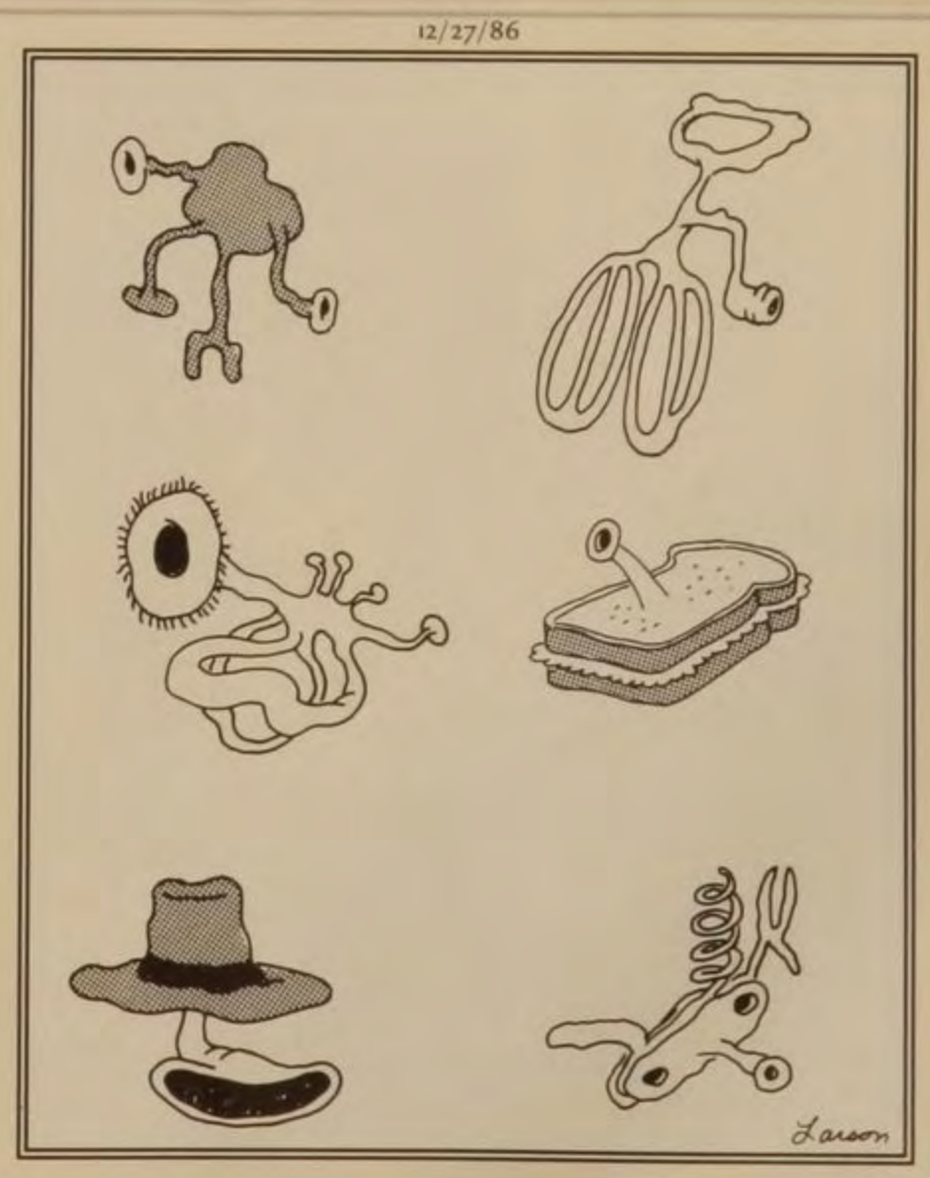
12/30/86



"It's Bob, all right ... but look at those vacuous eyes, that stupid grin on his face—he's been domesticated, I tell you."

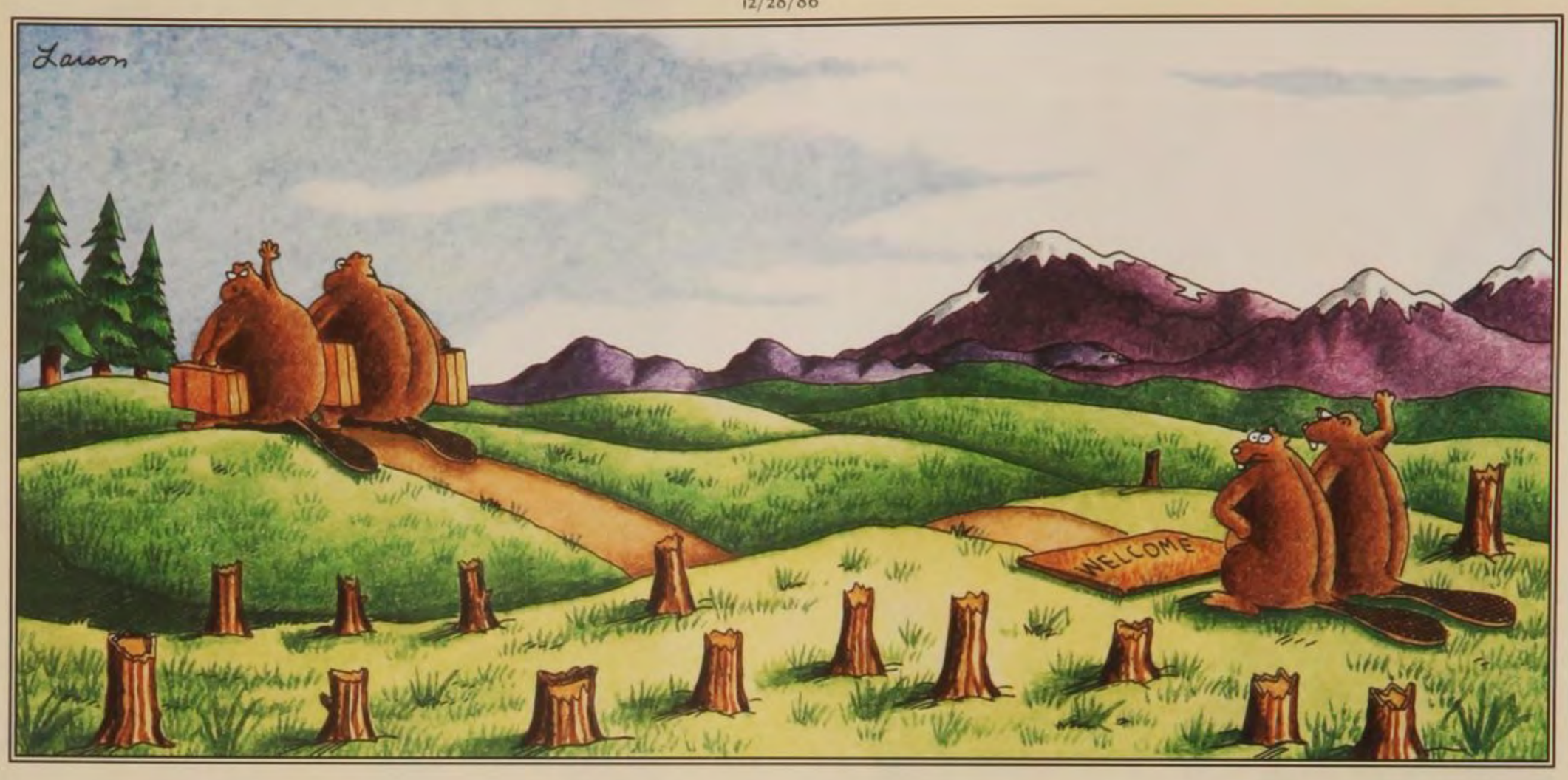
12/23/86

12/27/86



Some of the non-vital organs

12/28/86



And the Von Schnells were never invited back again.

12/31/86

licks

It's Everyb
Problem!

For More

The Moo Note

THE WAX BUTCHER MUSEUM

MRS. O'LEARY'S COW 1859-1871

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Bob sucks on electric fences

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FRANK MOODY HAS OATS FOR BRAINZ